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Socialization of preservice teachers in the area of early literacy education

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Socialization of preservice teachers in the area of early literacy education

by

Sharon Jane Jensen

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education

Major Professor: Theresa E. McCormick

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2000

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**This is to certify that the Doctoral dissertation of

Sharon Jane Jensen

has met the dissertation requirements of Iowa State University**

Signature was redacted for privacy.

Major Professor

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For the Major Program

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For the Graduate College

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

Dr. Theresa McCormick, my major professor
For patiently, skillfully, and compassionately guiding me
through the dissertation process;

Dr. Donna Merkley, my college teaching mentor
For showing me how to plan, teach, and evaluate college coursework;

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The image of teaching advocated here is dialogic: teaching must be situated in relationship to one's biography, present circumstances, deep commitments, affective investments, social context, and conflicting discourses about what it means to learn to become a teacher. With this dialogic understanding, teaching can be reconceptualized as a struggle for voice and discursive practices amid a cacophony of past and present voices, lived experiences, and available practices. The tensions among what has preceded, what is confronted, and what one desires shape the contradictory realities of learning to teach. (Britzman, 1991, p. 8)

In the fall of 1993 I read Deborah Britzman's book, *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*, and was introduced to ideas and language that explained my own confusing experiences of becoming an elementary teacher. Furthermore, as a graduate student newly interested in becoming a teacher educator, her book opened the door to an entirely new paradigm about how teachers learn to teach. Now as I assume my role as a teacher educator in the area of elementary literacy education, her book has become an old friend which I revisit often to remind me of the "contradictory realities of learning to teach" that are facing the preservice teachers in my care and to guide me as I plan appropriate learning experiences for them.

For me, a move towards a dialogic approach to teacher education as recommended by Britzman and others (Crow, 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Ayers, 1993), means considering the dominant discourses in field experience, teacher socialization, and early literacy education. Therein lies my need to do the literature review, which contributes to my rationale for this study. Additionally, the research paradigm used in teacher education in each of the previously mentioned discourses is lacking in naturalistic or qualitative studies (Guyton, E., & McIntyre, D., 1990; McIntyre, D., Byrd, D., & Foxx, S., 1996). Therefore,

the need for this study is evident to me. Toward this end, this critical ethnography studies the lived experiences of five preservice teachers and hence dialogically examines how they came to construct and organize these experiences during their participation in an early literacy methods course and the concurrent field experience.

Teacher Education

In this section of the dissertation, I will discuss the areas of teacher education that not only guided this research, but are foundational to the understanding of this dissertation. Early literacy education, the background, and teacher socialization and field experience, the foreground, are theoretically grounded teacher education orientations that undergird the experiences of the informants in this study. It follows then for teacher preparation programs to consider these orientations and respond accordingly by disseminating and enacting the corresponding current research (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Hoffman & Pearson, 2000).

Historically speaking, one response includes coursework accompanied by reflective field experience (Conant, 1963; Joyce, Yarker, Howey, Harbeck, and Kluwin, 1977; Goodman, 1985; Zeichner, 1985). The resulting additional field experience utilized by many teacher preparation programs and supported by the state Department of Education in Iowa is embraced as best practice because of the current literature which supports field experience in schools is a good teacher (Ayers, 1993; Nelson & Hammerman, 1996). However, when field experience is critically investigated, discrepancies in the value of these experiences surface (Johnston, 1994; Munby & Russell, 1994; Wilson, 1996). This investigation continues in Chapter 2.

Currently speaking, early childhood experts referring to the necessity of quality early literacy education (Bredekamp, 1996; Purcell-Gates, 1997; NAEYC, 1998; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) have focused the attention of the educational leaders in our nation (ESEA--Reading Excellence Act) and the state of Iowa (Iowa House File 743—Class size and reading) on early literacy learning legislation. Additionally, research investigating the characteristics of quality early literacy instruction (Strickland, 1998; Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998; Moats, 1999; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999) has supported educational initiatives in Iowa such as *Every Child Reads* and expanding *Reading Recovery* training for teachers. A discussion of this research is presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Considering the increasing and questionable “role” of field experience in teacher preparation programs, the emphasis on quality early literacy learning, and that there is “insufficient research specifically addressing the issue of early childhood teacher education” (Bredekamp, 1996, p. 323), the need for a study of field experiences in early literacy teacher education is founded.

Methodology

The process of becoming a teacher is a different experience for everyone. The decision to study preservice teachers’ socialization during field experiences in literacy education using qualitative methodology was made to allow me to deeply understand how these experiences meet the needs of teacher education students. Additionally, Kuzmic (1994,

p. 16) suggests qualitative research design is beneficial to understanding the socialization process for the following reasons:

First, little effort has been made to explore the teaching perspectives of beginning teachers as they are formed, developed, and changed over the course of time and within the context of the lived reality of these teachers. Second, by focusing on groups, individuals have come to be viewed as powerless to resist the biographical or institutional forces which shape their views of teaching so as to conform with traditional norms and values which operate within schools.

Therefore, this study will embrace the interpretive research paradigm as a means for understanding the socialization of preservice teachers during an early literacy methods field experience.

Theoretical framework for interpretive research

In his book, Interpretive Interactionism, Norman Denzin describes the six phases or steps in the interpretive process used in this study (1989, p. 48). My methodology discussion for this study begins with his first phase, called framing the research question. In order to frame the research question, the researcher initially needs to study her own biographical experience. Therefore, I begin with reflection on my own process of becoming a teacher.

Being a teacher has been my goal since I was nine years old. However, "the story of learning to teach begins actually much earlier than the time one first decides to become a teacher" according to Britzman (1991, p. 3). She suggests our experiences in public education have made teaching familiar to most everyone. The following brief educational biography is what I bring to this study.

My first students were my three younger sisters. To this day, those students remind me of how I would beg them to play school. For me, the process of becoming a teacher began in childhood. My mom tells stories of me collecting items and writing down science

experiment ideas for when I became a teacher. As I began the journey of a life devoted to education, little did I realize the amazing path I would follow.

This amazing path of learning to become a teacher began in a home led by white, middle class parents who envisioned the day their children would go to college. Currently the path is one of activity in the teaching profession like I never could have imagined. Not only am I a teacher, but I have the opportunity to study the process of teacher preparation at the higher education level.

My opportunity to study this process is filtered through my experiences as a student teacher (one semester), an elementary classroom teacher (six years), a cooperating teacher (three semesters), a college practica/student teaching supervisor (seven years), and an elementary literacy methods instructor (four years). As a student teacher, I was well aware of the behaviors needed to be successful. My own mother's frustrations during student teaching were constant reminders of the complex student teaching experience. However, after seventeen years of formal education, I knew how to survive the written and hidden curricula that I faced during student teaching.

During my six years of elementary teaching in the first and third grades, I was fortunate to find myself in progressive school districts. We were encouraged to study and implement "new" techniques, etc. When my turn came to be a cooperating teacher, I tried to give the preservice teacher as much *choice with guidance* as possible. However, much to my frustration, the preservice teachers would much rather I make the decisions. I could not understand why the freedom to be active in their own professional development was not desirable.

The role of the practica/student teaching supervisor was probably the most frustrating experience compared to being a student or a cooperating teacher. Although I ultimately had the power of grading the practica/student teaching experience, I felt powerless when making classroom observations and suggestions for the student teacher. I was obviously not in home territory and weekly observations did not make me an active participant in the classroom culture. My role was to maintain a professional dialogue between the public schools, the student teacher, and the teacher education program which often meant encouraging the student teacher to not make waves.

My past experiences were the motivation behind my master's thesis, a quantitative study of the supervisory behaviors of cooperating teachers. The results revealed that the student teachers' perceptions of their cooperating teachers were not parallel to how the cooperating teachers perceived themselves in many aspects of supervising the student teaching process; yet, both groups reported the same desirable behaviors, as far as supervision is concerned (Jensen, 1993). To me this points to a lack of true communication of goals and beliefs between the members of the student teaching experience or another example of fragmentation of experience. In order to understand this fragmentation beyond numbers, I then conducted a pilot study as a requirement in the *course HPC 580 Qualitative Research Methods*. The pilot study, "Experience is the Best Teacher? A Case Study of Learning to Teach," described the contradictory realities enhanced by added field experiences in a school-based teacher education program.

From my personal experiences with the process of becoming a teacher, I cannot name myself as a disinterested party in this study. My motives and desires for pursuing this study are done in the name of inquiry and reflection. However, I am trying to deeply understand

my own continual journey of becoming a teacher and a qualitative researcher. "By looking at what problems interest us and at what questions we ask, we may discover an avenue that leads us to a better understanding of what is important and of meaning to each one of us" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 178). As you can see from the brief summary of my personal experiences, the questions guiding this study are very important to me.

Another component in framing the question, according to Denzin (1989, p. 49) is to discover how this problem is a public issue that affects multiple lives, institutions and social groups. It goes without saying that this is a public issue. Education, in our country is a public issue. Those most responsible for directly educating children are teachers. Therefore, the formal preparation of teachers by institutions affects almost our entire population. The question of how a person becomes a teacher, especially while participating in a teacher preparation program, is important.

The second step or phase in the interpretive process according to Denzin (1989, p. 48, 51) is to deconstruct the phenomenon by looking at how it has been presented, studied, and analyzed in the existing literature. This is presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Capturing multiple instances of the phenomenon in its natural setting, step three in the interpretive process (Denzin, 1989, p 48), occurs from interacting with respondents. Interactions for this study will take the form of in-depth interviews and field observations. An overview of this step will be addressed later in this chapter. Chapter 3 provides a thick description of the context of this study and Chapter 4 consists of the resulting case studies.

Bracketing, step four in Denzin's interpretive process, involves looking at the subject matter—fragmentation of experience in the teacher socialization process during literacy field experiences—on its own terms (Denzin, 1989, p. 55). This occurs by examining the

experiences of the informants collected by the interview process and “finding themes that cut across cases” (Huberman & Miles, 1998, p. 196). During the research process, the fifth and sixth steps in the interpretive process will put the phenomenon back together and contextualize it into the social world in order to show how lived experience alters the phenomenon. Critical theory will be used as the lens for interpretation during the contextualizing process presented in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Informants and site selection

According to Johnson (1990), informants are often selected on the “basis of their attributes, such as access to certain kinds of information or knowledge” (p. 10). He suggests this type of “theoretical sampling” (Johnson, 1990, p. 38) as an emphasis on the importance of theory in guiding the research. For this study, I needed to locate preservice teachers enrolled in an early literacy methods course and a related field experience. I began by visiting such a course during the first week of the spring 2000 semester on the campus of a land grant university of science and technology located in a midwestern town with a population of 48,000. During this visit I briefly explained my research proposal and asked students to complete a short form with their name, email address, phone number, and level of interest in such a study. The sixteen students responding “very interested” and “somewhat interested” on this form each received an email from me requesting them to schedule an initial interview. Six students responded.

After the initial interview, five of the students satisfied all the requirements for informants set forth by Rubin and Rubin (1995). These requirements include knowledge of the experience being studied, willingness to talk, and representation of various points of view

(Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 66). The one student dropped from this ethnographic study was unwilling to commit to the amount of time necessary for full participation in this study.

The students enrolled in this early literacy methods course were scheduled to participate in a required practicum or field experience all day on Mondays and Wednesdays during weeks 12, 13, 14, and 15 of the 16 week course. For my own practical purposes, I asked the university practicum placement coordinator to place the five informants in one school district. The selected school district is approximately 40 minutes south of the university campus and is a suburb of the capitol city. Its K-12 enrollment is approximately 8,697 students and the ethnicity of the district is 91.4% white. The names of all teachers, students, and schools in this study have been changed to insure their confidentiality. A more detailed or thick description of the context of this study is presented in Chapter 3.

Data collection and data analysis

After completing the Review of Research Involving Human Subjects and receiving approval from the Iowa State University Human Subjects Review Committee, the research took place January through April 2000. There were four general phases in the data collection and analysis process.

Phase 1

January 10 through 21 focused on identifying 5-7 informants for this study from the early literacy methods course offered at the midwestern land grant university. Each informant signed a consent form (see Appendix A.).

Phase 2

February 4 through March 24 consisted of three on-campus, unstructured individual interviews with each of the informants for the purpose of learning "to see the world from the

eyes of the person being interviewed" (Ely, 1991, p. 58). These "open-ended ethnographic (in-depth) interviews" (Fontana & Frey, 1998, p. 56) can be used to understand the complexities of a phenomenon, such as learning to teach, rather than capture "precise data of a codable nature" (Fontana & Frey, 1998, p. 56).

Phase 3

March 27 through April 14 consisted of one observation in the field for each informant, two semi-structured interviews with each of the informants, and a review of a lesson plan from each informant during the required early literacy practica experience. Additionally, each informant's cooperating teacher was interviewed for further credibility or trustworthiness purposes of this study. This effort to use multiple methods, often called triangulation in the qualitative research literature, to make sense of an event, such as preservice teachers learning to teach early literacy learners, is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation (Denzin, 1989).

Phase 4

April 17 through April 28 consisted of wrap-up interviews, member checking, and peer debriefing to ensure validity (Wolcott, 1990). During phases 2 through 4, I worked with the informants collecting data and writing. The collaborative nature of this research resulted in constant rewriting and reviewing of the data, referred to as *constant comparison* by Glaser & Strauss (1975) and Goetz & LeCompte (1981). Additionally, member checking, as described by Wolcott (1990), involves the respondents by asking them to read and respond to the researcher's interpretations, which in turn, results in further revisions. Finally, peer debriefing, recommended by Wolcott (1990) as an opportunity to seek feedback, with a colleague familiar with qualitative research added to the validation process.

Guiding questions

In this research I examined how preservice teachers interpreted their experiences, both personal and those constructed by teacher preparation programs, in becoming an early literacy educator and how this affected their socialization process. I am interested in working with preservice teachers who are enrolled in a primary reading methods course and concurrent practicum.

The guiding questions I explored are these:

1. How have the personal early literacy experiences of these preservice teachers affected their beliefs about early literacy education?
2. What is it like to be a preservice teacher during field experiences?
3. How have field experiences informed them as teachers of early literacy learners?

Due to the evolving nature of interpretive research, additional questions will be developed based on the information from the respondents. (See Appendix B)

Summary

This qualitative study examines how field experiences in early literacy methods courses affect the socialization of preservice teachers. The dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature in teacher education regarding early literacy education, field experience, and socialization. Chapter 3 provides the context of this study. The case studies of the five informants are presented in Chapter 4. Findings, conclusions, and recommendations for teacher education in the areas of early literacy education, teacher socialization, and field experience are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review summarizes the pertinent research in teacher education, which are foundational to understanding this study. This literature review is organized as follows: 1) early literacy education, 2) teacher socialization, and 3) field experience. First, the area of early literacy education reviews reading achievement research, practitioner research, and research reviews. Next, functionalist, interpretive, and critical approaches to socialization provide the framework for studying teacher socialization. Lastly, a meta-analysis of interpretive research synthesizes the literature in the area of field experience by sharing key narratives from six qualitative research studies.

Early Literacy Education

There are several reasons for teacher preparation programs to place emphasis on early literacy education (throughout this study literacy and reading are used interchangeably). While some researchers point to the relationship of successful early reading ability with future reading success (e.g., Juel, 1988; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Leslie & Allen, 1999), others focus their attention to teacher characteristics and the methodology related to successful early literacy education (e.g., Braunger & Lewis, 1998; Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, Hampston, 1998; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999). Finally, the importance and the broadening scope of early literacy education suggests teacher education programs pay particular attention to this issue (e.g., Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Jalongo, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Reading achievement research

Juel's longitudinal research focused on the literacy development of 54 children from first through fourth grade. By comparing scores from standardized achievement tests, she found it statistically significant that children who were poor readers in first grade continued to be poor readers in the fourth grade. Juel (1988) concluded that early success with reading appears critical. Recommendations from this study to end this vicious cycle of poor reading achievement included focusing on early literacy education—particularly word recognition and increased exposure to print.

Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) studied the reading ability of a group of 56 eleventh graders who were participants in a previous study on reading ability during their first grade year of school. They found that first grade reading ability was a strong predictor of the eleventh grade reading outcomes. Students who were good readers in first grade were also good readers in the eleventh grade. Furthermore students who were able to get “caught up” by third and fifth grade met the eleventh grade reading outcomes. The results were interpreted as demonstrating the importance of early reading education—particularly exposure to print. Therefore, teachers need to be well prepared in early literacy education.

Considering the research suggesting early success in reading's strong relation to later success in reading, Leslie, and Allen (1999) studied the effects of an early literacy intervention project for children in grades first through fourth. Growth in reading was determined by weighted scores from an individual reading inventory and a standardized reading test. Children participating in the early literacy intervention project showed substantial reading growth over the year, which only partially was caused by developmental

factors according to the researchers. This study provides encouragement for teachers to intervene early with struggling readers in order to ensure future success in reading.

Practitioner research

Using classroom observation and interview, Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, and Hampston (1998) studied three exemplary first grade teachers. The school district's language arts coordinator nominated the informants and selection for the study was finalized based on observation measures of student reading and writing achievement and student engagement. The data supports the conclusion that effective early literacy education instruction "is a balance integration of high-quality reading and writing experiences and explicit instruction of basic literacy skills" (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998, p. 101).

Morrow, Tracey, Woo, and Pressley (1999) describe characteristics of six teachers in their observational study in order to answer the question "What is the nature of exemplary early literacy instruction?" Their conclusions of the best reading instruction can be categorized into setting, materials, types of instruction, and experiences/assessment. Examples of exemplary setting include: whole group; small group; one on one; teacher directed; center settings; and social settings with adults and peers (Morrow et al., 1999). Materials found in exemplary classrooms include: pencil and paper; literature; instructional texts; and manipulatives (Morrow et al., 1999). The types of instruction Morrow et al. (1999) found in exemplary classrooms are described as: spontaneous; authentic; explicit, direct; systematic; construction of meaning; problem solving; and open-ended. Lastly, experiences and assessment related to exemplary early literacy instruction include: shared reading and writing; guided reading and guided writing; word analysis instruction; comprehension development; oral and silent reading; independent reading and writing;

collaborative reading and writing; performance of reading and writing; and content connection in reading and writing (Morrow et al., 1999).

In Building a Knowledge Base for Reading, Braunger and Lewis (1998) provide a “research baseline for teachers, policymakers, decision-makers, and other interested persons to consider in helping all children meet today’s high literacy standards” (p. 1). Based on the synthesis of research, one conclusion is their list of practices which they agreed would *hinder* effective reading development. Braunger and Lewis’ (1998) list of ineffective practice is as follows:

- Emphasizing only phonics
- Drilling on isolated letters or sounds
- Teaching letters and words one at a time
- Insisting on correctness
- Expecting students to spell correctly all the words they can read
- Making perfect oral reading the goal of reading instruction
- Focusing on skills rather than interpretations and comprehension
- Constant use of workbooks and worksheets
- Fixed ability grouping
- Blind adherence to a basal program (p. 63)

Based on the practitioner research presented here, exemplary early literacy methodologies (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998; Morrow et al., 1999) and ineffective early literacy methodologies (Braunger & Lewis, 1998) have been identified. Preservice teachers need to learn about and have experiences with these recommendations for in order to become quality early literacy educators.

Research reviews

Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) were commissioned to synthesize the data on early reading development and presented their findings in the text, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children. As a basis for making recommendations to teacher education, the

authors point out that “a critical element in preventing reading difficulties in young children is the teacher” (Snow et al., 1998, p. 329). Accordingly, the report finds that teacher education programs allocate very little time preparing preservice teachers to teach reading and the course work in the area of teaching reading is “insufficient to provide beginning teachers with sufficient knowledge and skills to enable them to help all children become successful readers” (Snow et al., 1998, p. 329). Therefore, the authors’ recommendation for teacher education programs is to enhance the teaching of reading coursework with a focus on early literacy development.

In the preface of her book, Early Childhood Language Arts, Mary Renck Jalongo states that “today’s teacher of the very young child (from birth to age 8) is expected to be a much more knowledgeable and sophisticated professional than previously” (p. ix). She specifies that teacher preparation programs need to incorporate current trends in early childhood education, such as special education and comprehensive systems of support to children and families, as well as, the research about young children as language learners. She concludes that the “early years are ‘prime time’ for language development; therefore, it is particularly important for the young child’s teachers to be knowledgeable about ways of fostering language growth” (Jalongo, 2000, p. xi).

Following a congressional request, the National Reading Panel was created in 1997 with the charge of reviewing the available literature and making recommendations for the effective teaching of reading. Recommendations for teacher education were included in this report because of its obvious role in future literacy education. The National Reading Panel (2000) reported a growing body of research suggesting the relationship of quality teacher education and student outcomes. Additionally the NRP concluded that teachers with sound

professional education were more likely to use instructional methods associated with higher reading achievement.

In conclusion, early success in reading is crucial. Future early literacy educators have an increased and expanded role in teaching children to read. The role includes knowing the best practices for early literacy achievement and being able to implement them in a classroom. Finally, the research suggests that the role of teacher education in this is key.

Teacher Socialization

The educational circle, of which I am a part, defines an objective as an expected learning outcome resulting from an instructional experience (Eby, 1992). My life as a teacher requires that I write objectives, plan how to meet objectives, and measure student achievement of the objectives. More specifically as a teacher educator, I consider the question "What are the objectives of field experiences in teacher preparation programs?" as I plan elementary methods courses in literacy. Furthermore, I need to consider this question as I take my place as a student teaching and practica supervisor.

The objective of field placements is to give preservice teachers an opportunity to observe theory in practice (and eventually take an active role), thereby gaining a more realistic understanding of their college coursework and beginning the process of teacher socialization. The field component of the teacher socialization process, or amount of hours spent in the field, is specified in the Department of Education's standard U-38 (CU6) which states that "field experiences shall comprise a total of at least 50 hours' duration, at least 40 hours of which shall occur after a student's admission to an approved practitioner preparation program" (Simpson College, 1998, p. 152).

According to Zeichner and Gore (1990) there are three main traditions in teacher socialization research, which are identified as functionalist, interpretive, and critical. The way socialization is defined by these approaches guides the types of questions that are asked and the types of research conducted, which is then used to inform teacher education.

Zeichner and Gore (1990) emphasize the critical stance of socialization research because it allows for tension in the socialization relationship, encourages interaction rather than internalization, and depicts the socialization process as contradictory and dialectical.

Functionalist approach to socialization

Although this study does not take a functionalist stance towards investigating teacher socialization, a brief review of the background of this approach is warranted. Functionalism is the “oldest and still most pervasive approach to teacher socialization” (Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 329) and is rooted in the tradition of positivism. Socialization is “a subjective process—it is something that happens to people as they move through a series of structured experiences and internalize the subculture of the group” (Lortie, 1975, p. 61). The emphasis of the functionalist paradigm is reproduction of the status quo and in doing so “de-emphasizes complexity, contradiction, and human agency” (Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 330).

Fuller and Bown’s (1975) work regarding stages of learning to teach come out of this paradigm. Their stages identify what preservice teachers are “concerned with rather than what she is actually accomplishing” (Fuller & Bown, 1975, p. 37). Survival concerns is the first stage and is described as being concerned about one’s adequacy as a teacher, class control, being liked by students, supervisors’ opinions, and being observed, evaluated, praised, and failed. The second stage of concern is teaching situation concerns which means being concerned with having to work with too many students or having too many non-

instructional duties, being in inflexible situations, and lack of instructional materials. The last stage identified by Fuller and Bown (1975) is pupil concerns, which means recognizing the social and emotional needs of children, noting the need for developmentally appropriate practices, and matching curriculum to students' needs.

Interpretive approach to socialization

This study takes an interpretive approach to teacher socialization in that it seeks to understand the experience within the frame of reference of the individuals actually experiencing the event being studied. However, interpretive and functionalist approaches "both view socialization as an overarching process whereby the individual engages in role learning that results in the situational adjustment (passive or active) of the individual to the culture of the profession (Battersby, 1983, p. 327).

Crow (1986) critiques the functionalist approach to teacher socialization and qualitatively studies teacher socialization from the interpretive point of view. Her findings suggest to teacher educators to pay closer attention to the "personal perspectives which the preservice teacher brings to the preparation program" (Crow, 1986, p. 31) because this interaction of personal and professional influences preservice teacher socialization. Finally, she concludes that there is a hidden curriculum in teacher education about what it means to be a teacher and that this hidden curriculum plays a significant role in constructing teachers socially. The strength of the interpretive approach is naming this issue; however, problematizing it, or taking the critical approach, is not addressed.

Critical approach to socialization

A central purpose of critical approaches to teacher socialization "is to bring to consciousness the ability to criticize what is taken for granted about everyday life" (Zeichner

& Gore, 1990, p. 331). Research based on this approach, therefore, must be participatory and collaborative with a concern for social transformation such as “increasing justice, equality, freedom, and human dignity” (Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 331).

Fortunately, there are researchers in the field of teacher socialization who dare to ponder the time-honored field experiences that permeate teacher education programs, and therefore, consider the hidden objectives of such experiences. These people seek to deconstruct how people learn to be teachers from a social perspective. They choose to generate insights, explain events, and seek understanding (Anderson, 1989). Such critical research challenges familiar assumptions (or objectives), serves as an emancipatory function for the oppressed (Simon & Dippo, 1986), and raises objections to the status quo.

Experiences are how we make meaning in our lives. In teacher education, field experiences are one way of making meaning of the socialization process of becoming a teacher. Those before me expressing concerns with “experience as the best teacher” include the following: 1) Whether or not these experiences are educative or miseducative can be determined by the extent of fragmentation (Britzman, 1991); 2) Dewey (1972) urges us to consider how knowledge comes to be valued as experience; and 3) Authorship of our situations through active reflection is Greene's (1988) suggestion for making meaning from our experiences.

More specifically, Britzman's deconstruction of the student teaching experience in her book, Practice Makes Practice (1991), is an example of a study of how experience affects teacher socialization. In her book, she describes how the contradictory realities in the process of becoming a teacher are *enhanced* by the student teaching experience. Throughout

her ethnography, Britzman reveals the elements of contradiction through the lived experiences of two secondary student teachers.

One cultural myth Britzman uses to describe the contradictory realities of becoming a teacher is that "experience makes the teacher" (1991, p. 7). Phrases like "we learn by experience" or "experience is the best teacher" seem to place a common sense discourse into teacher preparation. However, as Britzman points out, "common sense depends upon what is already known--the obvious--and hence resists explanations about the complications we live" (1991, p. 7). Missing in this use of experience in teacher preparation is the context of personal lived experience securely attached to individuals wanting to become teachers.

Supported by the increase in the number of practica hours required by the state department for preservice teachers, it can be concluded that learning by experience is valued in the process of becoming a teacher; yet it is taken for granted. Evidence of this exists in the fragmentation of experience into isolated parts (knowledge from experience and experience from the knower or content from context) and in the assumption that real experience can somehow grant meaning to the student teacher. Britzman (1991, p. 53) remarks "experience is not instructive in and of itself." More practica involving fragmented experience may not be instructive. Therefore, this study seeks to specifically examine the presence of and the effects of fragmentation of experience in early literacy education field experience.

Britzman's concern with fragmented experience is rooted in Dewey's writings. He argues that "while every experience is a moving force, the point is how experience comes to be understood as knowledge and how knowledge comes to be valued as experience" (1972, p. 33). An obstacle to experience becoming knowledge in the student teaching experience is the "shattering of experience into discrete and arbitrary units that are somehow dissociated

from all that made experience in the first place" (Britzman, 1991, p. 35). Fragmentation occurs in the context of student teaching in four ways: the compartmentalization of knowledge; the separation of content from pedagogy; the separation of knowledge from interests; and the separation of theory and practice (Britzman, 1991, p. 35). Britzman concludes that the fragmentation of experience is carried out by authoritative discourse to silence the voice and experiences of practitioners.

Britzman (1991, p. 33) proposes "a dialogic restructuring of teacher education that begins with the recognition that multiple realities, voices, and discourses conjoin and clash in the process of coming to know." This is necessary for the goal of more democratic schooling through democratic teaching. Recognition, as such, could begin by valuing lived experience and in turn ensuring reflection on these lived experiences as part of the educative process. This study proposes an investigation of the lived experiences of preservice teachers, particularly in the area of early literacy education, and how they are a part of the educative process.

In order to enable experience to be educative, Maxine Greene (1988, p. 23) suggests authorship:

To be aware of authorship is to be aware of situationality and of the relation between the ways in which one interprets one's situation and the possibilities of action and choice. This means that one's "reality," rather than being fixed and predefined, is a perpetual emergent, becoming increasingly multiplex, as more perspectives are taken, more texts are opened, and more friendships are made.

Rather than fragment the lived experiences of future teachers, Greene encourages reflection and action. Through careful and thoughtful consideration of lived experiences, knowledge can be extended; and when examined, experience can become the best teacher. Therein lies the importance of this qualitative study and the need to critically examine the

role of field experience in the education and socialization of preservice teachers in the area of early literacy education.

Field Experience

This section of the review of literature was based on a qualitative meta-analysis methodology called meta-ethnography--the synthesis of interpretive research (Noblit & Hare, 1988). By definition interpretive research seeks to explain a social event based on the experiences of the participants (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Noblit & Hare, 1988). Similar to positivist research, interpretive research needs to include a synthesis of related studies. However, rather than accumulate knowledge from similar studies as proclaimed by the positivists in the form of literature reviews, the interpretivists strive for understanding the accounts from the human perspective to guide further research (Noblit & Hare, 1988).

More specifically, Noblit and Hare (1988) suggest a meta-ethnography is intended to enable: "(a) more interpretive literature reviews; (b) critical examination of multiple accounts of an event, situation, and so forth; (c) systematic comparison of case studies to draw cross-case conclusions; (d) a way of talking about our work and comparing it to the works of others; and (e) synthesis of ethnographic studies" (p. 12-13). Since ethnography itself is interpretation of interpretations, a meta-ethnography can be termed one more interpretation (Noblit & Hare, 1988). This translation process reveals to the researcher a social explanation of what is being studied.

Identification and screening of ethnographies

The first phase of the research was the collection of ethnographies that might inform on the initial interest of teacher socialization. As discussed earlier, required field experience

hours are increasing in teacher education programs. Therefore, studies related to field experiences were the focus. An exhaustive search of related studies was not the immediate rationale of this meta-ethnography. Rather the justification for the studies included here was determined by the relevancy of the studies to the initial interest of the researcher and the audience (Noblit & Hare, 1988).

Key narratives from the ethnographies

In order to present a line-of-argument synthesis, a sampling of key narratives from the ethnographies are displayed in Table 1. These compare the similarities and differences between the ethnographic studies. Additionally, the variety of concerns raised by the preservice teachers are intended to reveal constructed knowledge that may not be the overt intention of the field experiences themselves. Therefore, teacher educators may be moved to act upon these findings and alter teacher education curricula accordingly.

Discussion

For one semester, MacKinnon (1989) studied four student teachers during their eight week field placement in an early childhood program. He explored the reported tendency of student teachers to conform to the practices and expectations of their cooperating teachers. In this context, MacKinnon (1989) noted a dominant theme was their sense of having to conform to the expectations (stated or perceived) of their cooperating teachers. The effects of this behavior were reported feelings of powerlessness and frustration during the field experience. The most frequently mentioned reason for conforming to the established practice was the fact that the student teachers knew they would be evaluated by their cooperating teachers (MacKinnon, 1989). However, conformity was a "fact of life" (MacKinnon, 1989,

Table 1. Field Experience Narratives

	<u>MacKinnon (1989)</u>	<u>Hollingsworth (1989)</u>
TYPE & GRADE	Student Teaching K-3	Student Teaching K-12
CONCERNS OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS REGARDING THE FIELD EXPERIENCE	<p>"expected to be a teacher and a student at the same time" (p. 11)</p> <p>"until I'm not a student, I'll feel like a student" (p. 11)</p> <p>"feeling powerless" (p. 11)</p> <p>"teach lessons that are a 'no-no' according to my early childhood instructors" (p. 12)</p> <p>"student teaching is what counts in job placement" (p. 13)</p> <p>"bending to mold yourself into the mold that the teacher has for you" (p. 13)</p> <p>"I'm not even thinking anymore" (p. 14)</p>	<p>"modeling the cooperating teacher is important to getting a good grade" (p. 171)</p> <p>"learn to teach best by modeling cooperating teacher, not by self-trial" (p. 172)</p> <p>"I just don't know if teaching is for me . . . seems like I've got to be on them all the time to get them to pay attention" (p. 173)</p> <p>"student teachers are expected to be clones of their cooperating teachers" (p. 175)</p> <p>"I've sold out to the program to make other people happy with me" (p. 175)</p>
	<u>Dana (1992)</u>	<u>Richards, Moore, & Gipe (1994)</u>
TYPE & GRADE	Student Teaching Elem.	Early Field Placement Elem.
CONCERNS OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS REGARDING THE FIELD EXPERIENCE	<p>"I hope that next week they can take me more serious as their teacher" (p. 7)</p> <p>"I don't think anything prepares you for this" (p. 10)</p> <p>"the cooperating teacher told me I can just guarantee them [5 boys] being bad everyday" (p. 5)</p> <p>"we have, I guess it's assertive discipline when you write their names up on the board . . . actually, I don't like it . . . sometimes I just would like writing people up that have been good all day" (p. 8)</p>	<p>"this was unlike any school I've ever been in . . . I'm not used to the way they talk to me--I can't deal with it" (p. 6)</p> <p>"somehow I am afraid . . . I woke up every hour on the hour all night" (p. 7)</p> <p>"what am I supposed to do with these kids . . . this school is a terrible place . . . the kids don't listen" (p. 7)</p>

Table i. Continued

	<u>Goodman & Fish (1997)</u>	<u>Martin, Martin, & Martin (1999)</u>
TYPE	Field Experience Semester Prior to Student Teaching	Field Experience Semester Prior to Student Teaching
GRADE LEVEL	K-6	K-3
CONCERNS OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS REGARDING THE FIELD EXPERIENCE	<p>"The present curriculum lacks a true sense of purpose, making no attempt to relate to the lives of those who study it or teach it. It is established outside the classroom without any knowledge of its clientele. Teachers who create thematic units must actively and creatively take part in designing the curriculum." (p. 98)</p> <p>Researcher fieldnotes: "Roby was told that she had to teach a unit on the Civil War. She was given a workbook that contained the lessons for the unit. However, Roby explained that the assignment required her to teach an "original" unit; not one directly from a textbook. The cooperating teacher expressed concern that the pupils might not "get" this information if she didn't follow the workbook. Since the focus of this workbook was to have students memorize a number of specific political and military "facts," Roby suggested and the cooperating teacher agreed that the children could complete the workbook at home. As a result, Roby was able to focus her unit on the social history of this war." (p. 104)</p>	<p>"All kids do is worksheets" (p. 59)</p> <p>"traditional lessons . . . emphasizing a skill of the day." (p. 59)</p> <p>"The teacher used some children's literature, but mostly used the basal reader" (p. 59)</p> <p>"children taking turns reading aloud, followed by doing worksheets" (p. 59)</p> <p>"teachers letting children take turns reading orally . . . going down each row" (p. 59)</p> <p>"mainly just read the book or story, or had the children read, and asked them questions afterwards. . . . recall or inference" (p. 60)</p> <p>"seldom were [children] asked to apply the story to their own lives" Sometimes the teacher would "ask the children to write about their favorite part afterwards or something like that . . ." (p. 60)</p> <p>"When I read aloud to the kids, they moved chairs closer and closer. The teacher got mad at them, but I felt like they were really involved. She didn't understand how they were acting because she never reads to them." (p. 60)</p>

p. 14) for the student teachers and they reported that it had not forced them to abandon their beliefs during this artificial teaching experience.

Hollingsworth (1989) argued that field experiences tended to "promote rote copying or modeling of the (cooperating teacher's) behavior, limiting the depth of preservice teachers' processing of information and change in beliefs" (p. 186). Unlike MacKinnon, Hollingsworth attributes this conformity to student teachers being matched with cooperating

teachers of similar beliefs. Furthermore, she deemed contrasting viewpoints between the cooperating and student teacher as desirable for knowledge growth during the field placement. However, she feels the contrast needs to be tempered with a flexible approach to the entire placement whereby the student teacher is supported by the cooperating teacher and the college supervisor when attempting to go against the grain. Regardless of Hollingsworth's interpretation of the documented events, her informants reported feelings similar to those of MacKinnon (see Table 1).

For Dana (1992), the culture shock experienced by the white, middle class student teachers during their urban field placement led to not only conformity in teaching, but also stereotyping of the diverse student population. The stereotypes resulted from extreme classroom management problems and the types of behaviors observed of the cooperating teachers when dealing with the students. In addition, the student teachers came to believe that teacher preparation courses could not possibly provide them with the tools to handle themselves appropriately in such situations. Dana (1992) concluded that this study reaffirmed the difficulty with classroom management commonly reported by student teachers, but also noted that the formation of negative student expectations became problematic as a result of student teachers trying to control their students.

Richards, Moore, and Gipe (1994) studied preservice teachers during a field placement in a culturally diverse school to determine how the urban setting contributes to the learning of the preservice teachers in both positive and negative ways. Similar to Dana, Richards et al. (1994) indicates that preservice teachers experienced frustration with classroom management and were quick to make value judgments of the school and children accordingly. However, when the preservice teachers experienced flexibility (similar to

Hollingsworth's interpretation) in their placements and were encouraged to examine their own assumptions, Richards et al. (1994) noted that their fear and anxiety levels lowered.

The purpose of the Goodman and Fish study was to "explore ways in which a group of elementary preservice teachers experienced teacher education coursework and early field experiences designed to foster a commitment to teach in a socially and pedagogically progressive manner" (1997, p. 96). In contrast to the four studies presented earlier, the first student narratives and researcher fieldnotes from Table 1 are examples of how field experiences can facilitate the process of becoming a teacher in a desirable way. Their findings did include contradictory and constraining influences of field experience on preservice teachers as well, however, the field experiences of preservice teachers in more "negotiable" settings provided them with a "rare opportunity to experiment and connect their educational theories and practices" (Goodman and Fish, 1997, p. 104).

Martin, Martin, and Martin (1999) analyzed journals and made field observations of preservice teachers enrolled in a field-based early childhood education program in order to learn how the field experiences affected knowledge construction in the area of early literacy. The accompanying coursework integrated reading/language arts methods with the other required content areas, such as social studies and science. As the quotations in Table 1 indicate, the field experience supported traditional methods of teaching, which happened to be dissimilar to the concepts presented in the college coursework. Additionally, the preservice teachers were told by their classroom mentors/cooperating classroom teachers that "the university is not educating future teachers to deal with the realities of the public schools" (Martin et al., 1999, p. 64). These mixed messages regarding early literacy

education convinced the researchers to carefully consider the practice of field experience as an asset to preservice teacher education.

Synthesis of the ethnographies

Each of the studies presented seeks to understand what is learned in the field and how it is learned. More specifically, the researchers reveal how field experiences "write and rewrite" (McWilliam, 1994, p. 109) preservice teachers. It can be inferred from these studies that field experiences strongly influence the teacher socialization process. Therefore, the objective has been met and we assume all is well.

However, the literature shows and the critics contend that the "hidden curriculum," or unwritten objective and the unintended consequences of field experiences are to show preservice teachers the unpleasant realities of teaching, which include conformity, control, and perpetuating stereotypes. As teacher education programs continue to increase the field experience requirements, so does the risk of revealing these unpleasant realities of teaching. According to the research, field experiences overwhelmingly put preservice teachers in a position to conform (Hollingsworth, 1989; MacKinnon, 1989). This occurs for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the need to simply survive the experience (MacKinnon, 1989). Goodman (1985) found that the majority of student teachers passively accepted the traditional curriculum and standard forms of instruction. Based on these results, conformity exists as an aspect of "hidden curriculum" in teacher education field experiences. Therefore, it is inappropriate to conceive field experiences as an intervention necessarily designed to "enhance" the innovative educational and instructional concepts presented on campus (MacKinnon, 1989).

Additionally, McWilliam (1994) quotes an informant's words describing the realities of teaching as "a partnership of powerlessness" (p. 124). The informant's thoughts were referring to a traumatic experience in the classroom which led her to be inducted into the "defeated professional group" (McWilliam, 1994, p. 124). Feeling disenfranchised seemed to make her part of the gang and was a milestone in the socialization process. Passivity and disenfranchisement are hardly desirable outcomes of field experiences in education. Since this research shows this to be a characteristic of preservice teachers or at least a learned characteristic because of the circumstances, McWilliams (1994) suggest further investigation into such outcomes of field experience.

Bullough and Gitlin (1995) suggest that the beginning teacher be at the center of teacher education. This means that the methodologies and experiences are intended to "enable the exploration and reconstruction not only of self, when deemed necessary, but also of context, in particular school context" (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995, p. xvi). Training teachers, as opposed to educating them, in essence means thinking of teachers as oppressed workers in an alienating system (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995). Critical ethnography supports this ideal as well and can be used to inform preservice teachers of their impending experiences. Therefore, the findings from this critical ethnography would be utilized to place the preservice teachers' lived experiences at the forefront of teacher education and reveal the "hidden curriculum" of field experience.

Summary

This review of literature has examined the research in teacher education regarding early literacy education, teacher socialization, and field experience. Specifically, it has

illustrated the need for research in the area of early literacy teacher education and called to question the commonly held belief that field experience in teacher education is “best practice.” Next, Chapter 3 will provide a thick description of the context of this study in order to bring this experience to life for the reader.

CHAPTER 3. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

A thick description . . . does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (Denzin, 1989, p. 83)

The context of this study is described in terms of the teacher education program at Iowa State University, the on-campus course with required practicum, and the practica sites-- which includes the elementary schools and the mentoring/cooperating classroom teachers.

Teacher Education Program

In order to be eligible for enrollment in *El Ed 377 The Teaching of Reading and Language Arts in the Primary Grades*, students must be admitted into the teacher education program at Iowa State University. The admission process, which occurs during the junior year, includes submitting an application to the University Teacher Education Committee. Admission is contingent upon the applicant's scholarship (2.5 grade point average and ACT composite score of 19), interest in teaching, character, physical health, and mental health. Transfer students are held accountable to the same requirements. All informants for this study were fully admitted to the teacher education program.

On-campus Course and Required Practicum

Syllabus

During the 2000 spring semester the informants for this study were enrolled in EI Ed 377, which was taught on campus by an experienced professor (not the researcher) on Mondays and Wednesdays from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. for 11-weeks. This four-credit course is the first in a series of two required reading/language arts courses for elementary education majors. Furthermore, the informants were enrolled in a three-credit elementary math methods course (EI Ed 448), as well, to complete the block scheduling.

The materials for the course included the text Phonics for the Teacher of Reading and a course packet of journal articles (*Word Building: A Strategic Approach to the Teaching of Phonics* by Thomas Gunning; *Making Words: Enhancing the Invented Spelling-Decoding Connection* by Patricia and James Cunningham; and *Developing Phonemic Awareness in Young Children* by Hallie Yopp), excerpts from several books, sample lesson plans, basal lessons, and activity idea handouts. According to the course syllabus, the goal of the course was to acquire basic knowledge about the teaching of reading/language arts in the primary grades, with an emphasis on kindergarten and first grade. Topics for the 11-week course included: reading theory and stages; shared reading; concepts about print; phonemic awareness; letter recognition; phonics; language experience; spelling; writing; sight words; structural analysis; basal readers; directed reading activity; comprehension; guided reading; early interventions; and informal reading inventories.

Practicum

Additionally, students enrolled in EI Ed 377 and EI Ed 448 are required to participate in a one-credit, pass/fail reading/language arts practicum (EI Ed 468A) and a one-credit, pass/fail math practicum (EI Ed. 468C). Each credit equates to about 30 contact hours in the field. This required practicum was the first field experience for the informants and would be followed by another one-credit field experience in intermediate reading, a one-credit field experience in science, and then a semester of student teaching.

This practicum takes place during four of the last five weeks of the semester. At that time, students are expected to plan, implement and evaluate a reading lesson, a writing lesson, and a math lesson. Students are placed at their practica sites by the field placement office and are supervised by someone other than the professor of EI Ed 377. The supervisors meet with the students and orient them prior to the field experience. The practicum supervisors for the informants in this study were two retired elementary school teachers and each was responsible for five practica students. The supervisors observed the students in their practica placements twice as a minimum. One of the observations involved watching the students teach an entire lesson and then providing feedback. The researcher had no contact with either the course professor or the practicum supervisors.

Practica Sites**School district**

The school district, which served as the practica site for the informants, consists of ten elementary schools, two junior high schools, one freshman high school and a grades 10-12 high school. Certified K-12 enrollment is 8,697. The district is approximately 40 minutes

south of the university campus so the informants had a fair amount of commuting time. The informants carpooled with peers from the El Ed 377 course to three different elementary schools within the school district. As noted in Chapter 1, this district is suburban, 91.4% white, and wealthy (assessed valuation per pupil is \$313,000.00 and per pupil expenditure is \$5,979.00). Only nine percent of the district's students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program, which places it in the bottom ten schools in the state receiving this federal assistance. The average base pay for teachers in the district is \$36, 561.00 and \$38,471.00 with state programs included.

As far as reading/language arts curriculum is concerned, the district embraces a balanced approach to literacy. Teachers are allowed to use materials of their own choosing in order to meet standards and benchmarks, which are based on input from staff and research from the National Standards. Additionally, the guided reading strategy was the focus of in-service for the district's elementary reading teachers. Finally, the district developed a collaborative plan with Iowa State University to place student teachers into a mentorship program.

In order to gain access to the practica sites, the researcher first presented the research proposal to the district's curriculum director. Next, the proposal went to the district's curriculum committee for approval. Once permission was granted, the three elementary school principals, who had agreed to host university practica students at their buildings, were contacted for permission for the researcher to observe in the schools and meet with the cooperating/mentoring classroom teachers. Every contact made with this school district was positive, pleasant, professional, and timely.

Elementary schools

The three K-6 elementary schools hosting the informants of this study are one-level, brick buildings—built between 1952 and 1961—nestled in middle class suburban neighborhoods. The rooms have windows, good ventilation, and an abundance of teaching materials appropriate for each grade level. Inside and out, the school grounds are clean, colorful, and inviting. The enrollment at each of the three schools ranged from as low as 274 to as high as 452 and 556 children. Individual class sizes of the classrooms hosting practica students varied from 18 to 26 children. Upon arriving at each of these buildings, on every occasion, there was a professional and friendly person in the office ready to welcome the researcher. After signing in as a visitor and pinning on the identification badge, clear directions directed the researcher to appropriate classrooms.

Mentoring/Cooperating teachers

The five informants were each individually assigned to a mentoring/cooperating teacher. These teachers were informed of the project prior to the start of practicum and all agreed to participate in this study by signing a consent form (see Appendix A), which meant allowing the researcher in their classroom to observe the setting and being interviewed by the researcher. The mentoring/cooperating teachers' years of experience ranged from 6 to 30 years; however, each of them displayed an upbeat and positive attitude about the teaching profession. All but one of the mentoring/cooperating teachers had worked with many practica and student teachers previously, and all felt that it was important to work with future teachers as a means for giving back to the profession. One teacher put it this way:

I guess I almost look at it as an obligation--an obligation to the teaching profession. You don't want more work, but it's just something you do to make sure we keep turning out good teachers. It's your obligation.

Additionally, three of the mentoring/cooperating teachers mentioned the importance of field experience in teacher education.

Second Grade Mentor: *I think there should be more of it. I graduated from. . . , and we were in the classroom from the very first semester. In fact, every semester, we were in the classroom. I think, college costs so much these days, what a terrible thing to get to where you're student teaching and get in the classroom and decide that's not what you want to do. I think you should be in there from the moment you enter an education program. I think you should be out in the schools every single semester in some point or another.*

Kindergarten Mentor: *Well, I guess every university is maybe different, but I think we need to give college students as many field experiences as possible and get them out into the schools maybe as early in their decision making as possible. As soon as they know that that's maybe a field they want to go into because I've heard of student teachers, even in our building that have gone all the way, and then once they get into the classroom, they're like "oh my goodness, this is not what I want to do." I think the earlier you can get them into the classroom, away from the university, and as many opportunities in the classroom as possible would probably be better for them.*

Third Grade Mentor: *I think getting field experience early is so important. Get them in early so they know what to look for because I think if they've been in the*

classroom, then the methods classes have more meaning as they go through. There will still be things that will be surprising.

When asked how to establish a good rapport with practicum students, each mentoring teacher had his or her own opinion on this issue.

First Grade Mentor: *I told her I was very open and very flexible to get her started right away. I don't let them sit and watch. I guess that's my best thing—everyone that's come in here comments about being able to start right off.*

Third Grade Mentor: *I just ask them what they're comfortable doing. He's been real great about jumping right in and taking over. You know. For example, I just asked him if he felt comfortable giving the spelling test and so I gave a couple of examples to show him how I do it. Then he gave the pre-test.*

Second Grade Mentor: *I told her the first day that I wanted her to relax. I don't like them to think of me as an authority figure. In fact, I try to joke with them and try to ease the situation a little bit because I want them to feel comfortable coming to me with any problem.*

Kindergarten Mentor: *I don't know if I am a good mentor or not. Open communication. I mean, we just talk a lot. I just try to involve her, get her involved with the students as much as possible. I've just tried to let her take charge in appropriate situations—like the opening, reading stories, and working with small groups. I guess, that's what I've tried to do. Just get her as involved as possible. Tell her all the things that I didn't know coming into the same situation—in a positive way. I'm not talking about nasty stuff. That's not what I'm about.*

Third Grade Mentor: Well, I think I'm letting him experiment. He's anxious to do anything. He wants to get his required lessons out of the way so that then he can do other things.

Last, the mentoring/cooperating teachers had nothing but good things to say about the informants of this study. For example:

First Grade Mentor: She's very good at communicating with the children.

Third Grade Mentor: I'm just impressed with his work ethic. A lot of the kids in college don't always have that. He kind of pitches right in when I ask him to do things.

Second Grade Mentor: She's doing fine. I couldn't ask her to work any harder.

Kindergarten Mentor: She's a really strong student. She knows what she's doing. I never have to redirect her or tell her what she has to do.

Third Grade Mentor: He's extremely organized and is doing a great job—even though he's only been here two weeks. The children regard him as a teacher and he has no discipline problems.

So considering the mentoring/cooperating teacher' comments above, their positive attitudes towards teaching, the importance they placed on field experience, and their willingness to develop a rapport with the practica students, the climate of the practica site classrooms was conducive to learning how to teach reading. Additional information introducing each of the mentoring/cooperating teachers is presented in the informants' case studies in Chapter 4.

Summary

This chapter provided a thick description or contextualization of this study in terms of the teacher education program at Iowa State University, the on-campus course with required practicum, and the practica sites--which includes the elementary schools and the mentoring/cooperating classroom teachers. Next, Chapter 4 will present the case studies of the five informants, all preservice teachers enrolled in an early literacy education methods course and the concurrent field experience.

CHAPTER 4. CASE STUDIES

The social sciences are concerned with humans and their relations with themselves and their environments, and, as such, the social sciences are founded on the study of experience. Experience is, therefore, the starting point and key term for all social science inquiry.
(Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 153)

This chapter introduces the five informants for this study—Cassandra, Melvin, Aryn, Jasmine, and Michael—through the discussion of their lived experiences while enrolled in a primary literacy methods course and the concurrent field experience. At the time of this study, the informants were of at least junior status and all had been admitted into the teacher education program in good standing. With the exception of Melvin, all of the informants were transfer students.

Each case study contains personal data about the informant, a description of his/her field experience site and cooperating teacher, and interview data. The first category of interview data, or pre field experience data, results from my conversations with the informants during the weeks while they were doing coursework on campus--before they went to their field experience. The second category of interview data, or midstream field experience data, was collected while the informants were involved in the field experience component of their early literacy methods course. Additionally, it includes data related to their presentation of a reading lesson, which was a requirement for passing the field experience component of the course. The last category of interview data, or concluding field experience data, was collected at the end of the field experience. Only the interview data that seemed powerfully related to the study is included in the case studies.

Cassandra

Personal data

Cassandra, a traditional-aged white, college student with sandy, shoulder length hair neatly tucked behind her ears, always arrived a bit early for our sessions. She exudes self-confidence and is a take charge kind of person. She feels her goal-orientedness and high standards for herself come from her mother. She is the oldest child from a middle-class family, but attended school with mostly lower class children—a place where she would like to return to as a teacher someday. Spanish and technology in education are Cassandra's other educational-related interests.

As a child, Cassandra was in the top reading group, but found herself feeling very uncomfortable with this designation.

Yeah, throughout I was in the top reading group. Sometimes it was uncomfortable being a good reader because I would be asked to read a lot, like in front of the class or whatever. I'd be chosen for examples when she wanted to give good examples or whatever. I remember that. Sometimes that was kind of awkward, just being singled out.

Despite the fact that Cassandra loved her elementary school experiences and her elementary teachers, she did not appreciate the added attention given to her because of her ability to read well.

Field experience site data

Cassandra was assigned to a classroom filled with 18 first graders. The cooperating teacher, Mrs. Klein, has twenty years of experience and also served as the substitute principal

whenever the building administrator was absent. On the day of the observation, I arrived just as the students settled in after a tornado drill. Cassandra was listening to a group of children read aloud and Mrs. Klein was working with a small group at the reading table. Another group was working independently on projects at their desks or on the floor.

From my observation and conversation with Mrs. Klein, the environment of and the types of reading experiences in this classroom met several of the literacy rich requirements set forth by Morrow, Tracey, Woo, and Pressley (1999). These include an abundance of print materials on the wall, language experience charts, pocket charts with sentence strips, open-faced bookshelves, portfolios, and reading/writing materials at all the centers. Additionally, Mrs. Klein encouraged the first graders to use a variety of word attack strategies, used guided reading groups for skill instruction, and had a daily read aloud time. My observations were reiterated by Mrs. Klein when I asked her "What does a quality early literacy program include?"

My literacy program has students working on everything all week long—computers, book boxes, reading rainbow, etc. A lot of times I'll have activities that go along with books we just finished reading. I have them writing during reading and doing listening centers. All of it has to be incorporated and going on at the same time—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—so the children know it is all connected.

Interview data

Pre field experience data

Cassandra wants to be a teacher because she just “loves kids.” She reports that her own teachers were “some of the nicest people she’d ever met. Additionally, there was some family input.

Well, I’m twelve years older than my youngest brother, and so I always took on kind of a teacher approach to him. Just being around him, I tried to just act like a teacher, well, not act like a teacher, but try to instill things in him that he should know, help with homework, stuff like that. It’s just really wonderful seeing him get something for the first time, or just the reward you get from the appreciation.

In our conversations prior to Cassandra’s field experience, I asked her “What do you hope to learn from field experience?”

I’ve talked to other people and they say it depends on the teacher. Sometimes the teacher just has you watch them, and sometimes you go in there and the teacher has you work with groups all the time. So you just go in there and grade papers. And so, I don’t know. I’m hoping to learn what to expect at certain grade levels and a lot about lesson planning. I like to be prepared, so that would be a big thing that I’d like to learn. I don’t know if I’ll get that.

Cassandra is aware of the possible scenarios of field experience and does have appropriate learning expectations.

Midstream field experience data

After a week in the field, I asked Cassandra, “What are you learning from Mrs.

Klein?

The need for organization. She's been teaching for quite a few years. I think 11 or 12. No, probably more than that. I forget, but a lot. She's had a lot of student teachers and practicum students. She said that one comment I made in the first day is that 'I can not believe that she knows exactly where to go to get something even in her own room.' I mean, she has no labels on the file cabinets, no labels on anything, and she'll know exactly what file folder to go to get this one worksheet. And, that's just incredible to me that you can have that kind of organization. I suppose that comes with time but still.

This quote is very telling of the responses of the informants during the first half of their field experience because the focus of learning reflects their concern for classroom management issues, such as organization.

Next, I asked Cassandra to tell me about her reading lesson on Sam the Minute Man. *Well, it's basically just a solitary reading group. In the beginning, we started with looking at maps, relating to setting and stuff like that because we've been focused on the American Revolution and stuff like that. Next we looked at some of the words that they would encounter that were very difficult and describing them to them. Then we just went through and read page by page. Each student took a page and we started reading the book. Throughout, I'd ask questions about what they were reading to make sure they were comprehending what was going on. Nothing too exciting.*

As far as planning the lesson described above, Cassandra hints at the notion that she would like the opportunity to be more original.

I watched my teacher give the first one, and then I kind of adapted it. One thing that's been difficult is coming up with your own stuff because she has a unit she's been

doing. She knows what she wants. That's not a problem for me. I don't have a problem doing that, it's just that being totally original--we don't have that much room, or at least I don't.

Lesson plan data

Cassandra's lesson on Sam the Minute Man was written according to Hunter's model of direct instruction and included all the required components. The lesson was sequenced well and was appropriate for the traditional "round robin," basal reading approach. Beginning with a rich discussion to the American revolution, Cassandra then introduced vocabulary words by writing them on a chart. After a reminder regarding what to do if they "got stuck," the children then took turns reading the story orally and following along. Strengths of the lesson include building background knowledge for the children by giving a thorough introduction to the story; reminding children of word identification strategies to use while reading; and modeling prereading strategies. Suggested areas of improvement include matching the learning objective with the independent practice; encouraging students to use word identification strategies beyond just "sound it out," "break it apart," and "ask a friend"; using higher order questioning to check comprehension; and taking a running record of the children's oral reading skills.

Concluding field experience data

During the last week of field experience, I asked Cassandra to describe how this experience had affected her as a preservice teacher.

As I mentioned before, I feel a lot more comfortable knowing I made the right decision. As far as self-esteem goes, I feel very capable whenever I'm in the classroom. My teacher that came and watched the classroom said she was surprised

at how calm I looked when I was teaching, but inside I was the opposite! She said on the outside, you couldn't tell. And that makes me feel good--even though I may be nervous, the focus remains on the children. I'm so ready to start. I don't like class anymore.

Finally, when asked to share her suggestions for future preservice teachers on how to do well in field experience, she replied: "always have a positive attitude; focus on students and put nervousness aside; don't put too much pressure on yourself; have high expectations for your students; if you get a rotten teacher, don't let it get you down; and be verbal--communicate what you need."

Melvin

Personal data

Melvin is a tall, traditional-aged, white, athletic college student who laughs easily and is very unassuming. He exudes a sincere concern for children and his quiet, laid back demeanor results from learning to effectively deal with his attention deficit disorder. He is the only child from a single parent home and credits his mom for his success. Her support was mentioned often in our conversations throughout the semester. Basketball and coaching little league are Melvin's other educational-related interests.

Melvin, like Cassandra, was in the top reading group in elementary school and enjoyed school and his teachers.

Not to brag, but I was always in the high reading group. . . . I mostly read sports books by Matt Christopher.

Additionally, Melvin reports that reading allows him to daydream and that was what made reading appealing to him.

Field experience site data

Melvin was assigned to a classroom filled with 26 third graders, which included two limited English proficiency students. Mrs. Barbara, a classroom teacher with nineteen years of experience, and her classroom environment struck me initially as a middle school classroom perhaps because of her abrupt demeanor with the children and the lack of instructional displays. On the day of the observation, I arrived finding Melvin checking papers for Mrs. Barbara while she was leading a lesson.

From my observation and conversation with Mrs. Barbara, the environment of and the types of reading experiences in this classroom met few of the literacy rich requirements set forth by Morrow et al. (1999). These include a bit of print materials on the wall, open-faced bookshelves, read aloud, and portfolios. Unfortunately, the bookshelves were simply the text sets used for guided reading, they weren't really available to students as a "classroom library." In this classroom traditional reading skills workbooks were replaced by "packets" created by the classroom teacher in a fashion similar to a traditional basal reading series. My observations were further substantiated by Mrs. Barbara when I asked her "What does a quality early literacy program include?"

We're doing guided reading. At the beginning of group, we usually discuss what they read from the day before . . . then we go on and read the next chapter. Sometimes the students just answer questions I ask or sometimes they just write a retelling of what they read. That's the directive instruction, I guess. The only negative to it, I think, is that it's all teacher made. You know, for the comprehension questions or for just the

skills. It's everything that you can kind of come up with. I miss the basal in that aspect that things are already there made for you. You don't have to create everything.

From this conversation, it became apparent that Mrs. Barbara was more comfortable with the traditional basal series because in essence she had taken the guided reading approach and turned it into a basal series complete with skills packets.

Interview data

Pre field experience data

Melvin wants to be a teacher because he "loves kids" and wants to make a difference in their lives. He wants to do for kids what his favorite teacher, Mr. Bizetto, did for him.

I think being a male role model is something I really want to be. I just grew up with my mom, so sometimes my teachers were my role models, so I just figured if I could give back in that way, that would be pretty all right.

Melvin describes Mr. Bizetto as a "good friend, somebody I still talk to when I go home and stuff." Having a male role model in his life assisted Melvin in his decision to become a teacher.

In our conversations prior to Melvin's field experience, I asked him "What do you hope to learn from field experience?"

Really just like time planning. I don't really know how teachers plan time. Like how they set up their day. And like, effective strategies for discipline are always nice, like what teachers do when they get in a bind. Just anytime you can get somebody's information and try to put that into practice, I think that's a good thing. Those are the two things I need to learn.

Again, classroom management issues are at the forefront of Melvin's learning expectations for field experience.

Midstream field experience data

After a week in the field, I asked Melvin "What are you learning from Mrs. Barbara?"

A lot actually. More than I thought I'd learn. She has all those little quirks that she does. Those things where you get two things done at once. You get the lunch and the attendance done. Then, um, like the gray book. Now I see how to do some of that. I kind of see how hers is laid out. Then she has all these things that she is doing. I think it's good that somebody that's been around that long I get a chance to work with. Just even the way that she carries herself in the class. She's not really sheepish or anything. She really is very confident.

Like Cassandra, Melvin notes classroom management issues first before mentioning anything about literacy education.

Next, I asked Melvin to tell me about his upcoming reading lesson.

I've read through the book. I think I'm going to go over vocabulary and new words in the beginning part. Answer questions they have, and discuss how it links to baseball. I haven't thought about it in detail yet. We're discussing it tomorrow. I want to stay close to what she wants and not get totally too far from what she wants. I'd like to do something outside of the book, but if she doesn't think it will fit, then I'll modify it.

As far as planning his upcoming lesson, Melvin hints (like Cassandra) at the notion that she would like the opportunity to be more original.

Lesson plan data

Melvin's directed reading activity on the Left-Handed Shortstop by Patricia Riley Giff followed a logical sequence and was modeled after the cooperating/mentoring teacher's teaching style. The lesson began by asking students to retell the two chapters read the day before and continued by asking students to predict what might happen in the upcoming chapters. Vocabulary words were presented in a sentence and then students were to read three chapters silently. Alphabetizing ten words from the story concluded the lesson. Strengths of the lesson include using retelling as a means for checking comprehension; encouraging students to predict before reading; and allowing children to self-select words to be used for practicing alphabetical order. Suggested areas of improvement include writing a clear and measurable learning objective; matching the learning objective with the closing activity; and writing out the questions to be used to check comprehension.

Concluding field experience data

During the last week of field experience, I asked Melvin to describe how this experience had affected him as a preservice teacher.

It has given me a lot of confidence. The kids do respect me and don't try to take advantage of me. They seem to understand- and don't miss a beat. Sometimes when they have questions, they come to ask me rather than Mrs. Barbara, and that made me feel good, too. I feel comfortable in this classroom. And, maybe next experience won't be as comfortable, but I won't worry about that now.

Finally, when asked to share his suggestions for future preservice teachers on how to do well in field experience, he replied: "do as much as you can; don't say no; hope you get a good

teacher if you're lucky; and do some reflecting--talk about it like what we've done with this research project."

Aryn

Personal data

Aryn, a tall, white, traditional-aged college student came to most interview sessions with her long blonde hair up in a clip and a smile on her expressive face. She is a self-described perfectionist--a real grade point average person--and is constantly "stressed out" by the pressure she puts on herself to do well in school. Aryn is the oldest child in her middle class family and feels that her parents want her to have a better life than them.

Aryn was a good reader in school and remembers being "bumped up" two grades in reading when she was in fourth grade.

In elementary school, my fourth grade teacher was really influential. I moved to Dobe when I was in fourth grade and the teacher made me feel really welcome, and I think she made me feel smart. And ever since then, my grades have gone up and all through high school I did really well. I mean, I was on the honor roll and 4.0 pretty much.

As far as reading now, Aryn likes to read when it is for herself and knows how to take her time to make sense of the text.

Field experience site data

Aryn was assigned to a classroom filled with 26 second graders almost right across the hall from Mrs. Klein and Cassandra. The cooperating teacher, Mr. McKimmey, actually had student taught with Mrs. Klein six years ago in this very school. On the day of the

observation, I arrived just as Aryn was taking the students on a bathroom break. With Aryn leading the line, Mr. McKimmey brought up the rear and remarked to me as he walked out the door, "She's kind of cute at this stage." At first I thought he was referring to the children, but he distinctly said "she's." My guard was up. When the students, Aryn, and Mr. McKimmey returned, I took a seat at the back of the room and watched as three second graders gave oral reports on ocean animals and participated in "praise, question, polish" as a follow-up activity.

From my observation and conversation with Mr. McKimmey, the environment of and the types of reading experiences in this classroom met some of the literacy rich requirements set forth by Morrow et al. (1999). These include print materials on the wall, open-faced bookshelves that were well-used by children, read aloud, displays of student work, and portfolios. It was really hard to focus on observing for early literacy characteristics with the "kind of cute" statement flashing like neon in my mind. So one of the first questions I asked Mr. McKimmey was "Have you had a reading practicum student before?" He replied, "no, only student teachers." So then I asked "what are you hoping a 'preservice' teacher like Aryn will learn in your classroom?"

Well, one thing I do with my teachers that come in is I let them find out for themselves. I kind of believe this with kids, if you never let them fall down, they never know how to get back up. When Aryn was here the first day, she was pretty nervous. It's almost kind of neat for me to sit back and watch because students come right out of college and they're so cute. They've got all these preconceived ideas. Then, all of the sudden a situation pops up where the book didn't tell them how to handle it and

they kind of get real nervous. But I think the only way that you learn how to do something is to get in there and do it. So, when a teacher comes to me, I try to get them into the flow of things as soon as possible and not bail them out of very tough situation.

Now, I understand his reference to Aryn as “cute.” It is all beginning to make sense.

Interview data

Pre field experience data

Becoming a teacher wasn't Aryn's first choice, but encouragement from her mom and her peers seemed to assist her making the decision.

Everyone I talked to said, “why don't you be a teacher, I think you'd be a really good teacher.” I was trying to push it away, but the more they said it, the more I thought about it and it clicked with me. I've always enjoyed kids and I think it's fun to help others. I was always more of the helpful kind when I was in school. So I think teaching would be a way for me to use what I've been given.

In our conversations prior to Aryn's field experience, I asked her “What do you hope to learn from field experience?”

Hopefully, I mean, I feel prepared enough to write lessons. I can write a lesson almost on anything it seems like, but as for getting up and knowing exactly what to do, like being flexible enough to change when the kids aren't ready to do something like that, or if they're just not in the mind-set. I think the flexibility factor is going to be hard to learn. I don't know. I don't feel prepared to do that, but hopefully, I'll adjust to that when I get into my practicum.

Aryn is confident with her lesson planning skills and looks forward to learning about developing her lesson presentation skills—a very appropriate learning expectation.

Midstream field experience data

After a week in the field, I asked Aryn, “What are you learning from Mr. McKimmey?”

I'm learning that I think I don't agree with his philosophy, he's told me that he can do anything with second graders as long as you scale it down. I don't really totally agree with that. They're at a developmental stage where some things you just don't do, like oral presentations. Even though, I think, they did pretty well. Some of them did really well. Others just, you could tell that they were just flustered and freaked out about it. I had to give them my input on it, and I'm trying to be positive. I didn't want to totally cut them down because they are only in second grade, but he says that his philosophy is that you can do anything in second grade as long as you scale it down. I don't agree with that.

Unlike the previous two informants, Aryn's response does not fall under the category of classroom management. She is taken aback by her sense that this field experience site does not embrace developmentally appropriate practices.

Aryn chose to do her reading lesson during the first week of practica. Her following thoughts on the lesson further support her concern regarding the appropriateness of student expectations in her second grade field experience placement.

I taught my reading lesson, and I didn't really agree with what I was teaching. But that's what he wanted me to do. They were reading Amelia Earhart books and Wright Brothers books. He thought that we should do a Venn diagram and compare Amelia

with the Wright Brothers,. You know, talk about how they were the same and different. Well, I had an objective and I was looking for 4-5 quality answers for both same and different. He told me to compare physical characteristics of a boy and a girl in the class first, so they kind of saw how to do a Venn diagram. So, we did that. They did pretty well with that. They understood that you write the differences out in the big circle, and you write the similarities in the middle. So, as far as understanding how the Venn diagramming worked, it went fine. But we went on to do the differences between the Wright Brothers and Amelia Earhart, and they were still picking these obvious things. The Wright Brothers have brown hair. Amelia Earhart has blond hair, but they were going after what was modeled. That's what he had told me to do. He didn't think I met my objective. I just felt kind of confused and upset at that point because he had told me to do it that way. I guess part of it's my fault because the objective wasn't written to say they will understand a Venn diagram.

Even though Aryn mentioned earlier in this case study that she was comfortable with lesson planning, she had a foreboding sense that this lesson plan was problematic. However, she followed her mentor's lead. Additionally, as Aryn mentioned earlier, she did not know what to do when the lesson plan failed. Unfortunately, the above example of critical thinking did not occur in a conversation between Aryn and Mr. McKimmey.

Lesson plan data

In the lesson describe above, Aryn followed the Hunter model of direct instruction accurately and thoroughly complete. The lesson began with a review of facts about Amelia Earhart and the Wright Brothers from the children's basal reading books. Then using two children from the class, Aryn modeled how to record similarities and differences on a Venn

diagram. Last, children worked in partners to complete a Venn diagram about Earhart and Wright. Strengths of the lesson include a clear and measurable learning objective; using a graphic organizer (Venn diagram) to help children organize information; and modeling the compare/contrast process. Suggested areas of improvement include guiding children to make higher level comparisons of the two stories; telling the children why this skill is important for them to learn; and completing a Venn diagram about the stories as a class rather than in partners (since this skill was just being introduced).

Concluding field experience data

During the last week of field experience, I asked Aryn to describe how this experience had affected her as a preservice teacher.

I feel like I'm supposed to be in teaching. I like it a lot. Maybe not necessarily second grade. I think they're cute, but I want something older. I've learned that. I've learned that I have too many expectations for myself. I need to learn to chill out a little bit

Finally, when asked to share her suggestions for future preservice teachers on how to do well in field experience, she replied: “be flexible (like if you want to do this and teacher says no, you have no option but to bend); be prepared for the worst; don't take things too seriously; have fun; and just relax.

Jasmine

Personal data

Jasmine, a traditional-aged Asian college student with shiny black hair, has the energy and bubbly personality of a cheerleader and the zest for life of a child. In fact, she

has turned these character traits into job opportunities as a cheerleading coach and a day care worker. Jasmine, an idea person, exhibits a great deal of creativity in her thinking and teaching and describes herself as organized and outspoken (she used the term “bitchy”). She and her sister were adopted as babies from Korea and grew up in an upper middle class family.

As a child, Jasmine remembers being in the “yellow” group which was the top reading group in her mostly white elementary school. Jasmine’s first experience with diversity was in junior high.

Junior high was the first time I ever went to school with black people and Hispanic people and other minorities. There were a couple of Asians too, so it was really nice. I really felt comfortable at a school where I didn’t have to look at the same type of person everyday.

She reports that one of the reasons for choosing to attend a large state university was the opportunity to continue her experiences with diversity.

Field experience site data

Jasmine was assigned to a classroom with 26 children in the morning kindergarten class and 26 children in the afternoon kindergarten class. She was in the same elementary building as Melvin, and her cooperating teacher, Mrs. Abu, had been teaching kindergarten for nine years. On the day of my observation, I arrived just as the afternoon class was coming in the room. Mrs. Abu and Jasmine were busy greeting children, checking their bags and directing them to centers. Jasmine circulated around the room drawing pictures, engaging the children in conversation, and prompting children in a unifix cube activity. An

extra person in the room certainly was advantageous to the children, Mrs. Abu, and the teacher associate.

From my observation and conversation with Mrs. Abu, the environment of and the types of reading experiences in this classroom met all of the literacy rich requirements set forth by Morrow et al. (1999). These include an abundance of print materials on the wall and within children's reach, language experience charts, pocket charts with sentence strips, open-faced bookshelves, portfolios, displays of children's work, and reading/writing materials at all the centers. Additionally, Mrs. Abu provided shared, guided, and independent reading opportunities for the children. My observations were reiterated by her when I asked her "What does a quality early literacy program include?"

Well, total immersion of books. I try to read as many books to the children as possible. We have a lot of multiple copies of books, so when teaching reading I feel it's important for them to have a copy of the book in front of them. I do a lot of modeling and a lot of pointing. We talk a lot about their background knowledge, what experiences they've had, does it relate to the book. Then they're better able to relate to the story if they've had experiences like that. . . . We do a lot of think alouds.

Interview data

Pre field experience data

Like Aryn, teaching was not Jasmine's first choice of college majors, but she realized that teaching was an important, rewarding profession.

It's just a feeling, I mean, you know when you look at somebody after they grow up and you can say 'I taught them,' you know, and you're such an influence on one, on a child's life. One teacher can make all the difference to a child. Like my dad always

was so proud of me and I thought they would be mad at me. Well, my mom was kind of disappointed that I changed majors. She was like 'the money, Jasmine.' My dad was like, 'don't tell your mom, but I am really proud of you because my teacher in 6th grade meant everything to me.' It's like one teacher, that can be you, because you can make one little kid's life change, and that's what I 'm hoping to do is find someone who might be lost and get them really into education. It's definitely the most rewarding job.

In our conversations prior to Jasmine's field experience, I asked her "What do you hope to learn from field experience?"

To get better you need practice and right now I don't feel prepared to teach. I'm nervous about my practicum--I mean nervous excited. I just think I don't know everything. Like I wish there was a guide that said first you need to teach kind of like this area of things, and then you should move on. I'm just afraid I'm going to teach in the wrong order, and the kids are going to be like all messed up because I don't know what I'm doing as far as what's appropriate at each level. That's what I would definitely like to learn more about. Get more experience trying out my lesson plans. We don't do lesson plans. I haven't made up a lesson plan in so long.

This is probably the only example of Jasmine exhibiting any hesitant behavior, however, her comments show that she is concerned with the children's learning and not classroom management so much. This can be explained by her current job experience.

Well, it's so different from daycare. The only thing that I'm getting from my daycare experience is definitely discipline and behavior management because I know that I've worked with that for so long, and it helps me. This helps me spend less time on that

because I already know how to do it and concentrate more on the curriculum or whatever they're learning. So, it's easy for me to be like, 'o.k. go back to your table.'

Midstream field experience data

After a week in the field, I asked Jasmine, "What are you learning from Mrs. Abu?" She gives me great ideas to do for lessons. Um, she's like you can modify as much as you want. She's letting me do anything I want, but I want to kind of stick to her curriculum. I don't want to go too far out with it. She gives me great ideas with that. Any discipline problems I might have, she gives me advice on that. We just talk about all kinds of things. How I could have handled something different. I just ask her anything. It's pretty open.

Jasmine reported being very satisfied with the information and assistance she was receiving from Mrs. Abu and she acknowledges the freedom she has been given in lesson planning.

Along with the freedom in lesson planning, Jasmine was given numerous opportunities to independently work with small groups.

The first time I did the small group, we did a fishing game. It had rhyming words on it. It didn't go very well. Like, they weren't, it was kind of chaos because I have like nine kids in one group, and all these fishing poles going all over. Magnets sticking it, and I don't think they got the idea of what a rhyming word was. So, next time in the afternoon when I did it, I was like, "who knows what a rhyming word is?" They gave me examples of cat and hat. I was like, O.K. I wrote cat/hat. I was like, "what letters do you see that are the same?" They'd say, "Oh, the "at." So I'd say, "So the ending is o.k. but the beginning letter can change." That helped them so much. I wrote them all on the board--like it, at, whatever they were. They did a lot better with the fishing

game and didn't need as much help from me. They kept going "what's this word, what's this word?" I don't like giving them the answer. I'd rather them try to figure it out from what we talked about.

Having an opportunity to reflect upon a lesson, make revisions, and reteach it is definitely an advantage of field experience in a half day kindergarten.

Lesson plan data

Jasmine's directed reading activity using the big book Grandpa, Grandpa was a developmentally appropriate literature event for her group of kindergartners. The lesson's anticipatory set activated the children's schema regarding beaches and grandparents. Then using the big book, Jasmine highlighted the sight words *what*, *will*, and *we* and the punctuation used for a question. Last, the children asked Jasmine a question beginning with the word *what*. Strengths of the lesson include a clear and measurable learning objective; using authentic text to introduce sight words to emergent readers; and selecting a big book to teach concepts about print, such as question marks. Suggested areas of improvement include providing more input for the "during reading" phase of the lesson; modeling prereading strategies; and accounting for the performance of the partners in recognizing the sight words.

Concluding field experience data

During the last week of field experience, I asked Jasmine to describe how this experience had affected her as a preservice teacher.

It backs up my reason as to why I want to be here, why I'm taking all these stupid classes and why I'm spending all this money. I remember that someday, I'll be one of these teachers. As far as getting a job, my teacher has helped me a lot in getting

organized and started. It has definitely left me in a more positive mindset. Now I'm wondering if I was in a different classroom, how it would've been.

Finally, when asked to share her suggestions for future preservice teachers on how to do well in field experience, Jasmine's response contains valuable insight regarding this multi-faceted experience.

Have fun. Definitely, and just get out of it as much as you can. Take everything in. That's why I try to keep record of everything. I really like that I'm like typing all of this out and reflecting on it the day afterward. When I get home, I write stuff about how things are going. I'm collecting all this information and trying to get it organized now, so later on if I need something, I can look back at it. Try to keep everything organized. Be open-minded about the situation. If I have a bad day, that's o.k. You're allowed to have bad days. Some people take life too serious, and I'm not one of those people. You only live once, so you've just got to go with the things that are thrown in your direction.

Michael

Personal data

Michael is a traditional-aged white college student who always came to our interview sessions with curious questions for me about graduate school and my research project. He is a clean-cut, All-American type young man with a very strong work ethic, religion, and sense of morals, which he credits to his middle class family and growing up in a small town.

However, growing up in a small town did have its downsides according to Michael.

I came from a small town of 1000 people and graduated with 31 people. I just felt like, and many of my high school classmates agree, we always got the worst teachers because it was a small school. They couldn't afford it budget-wise to get good teachers and it just felt like we got the shaft.

As a child, Michael remembers having a lot of books in his home as his impetus for learning to read.

We had so many books. It was like this huge box. I think that I was always surrounded by books. So I think that I really learned to read at home. I think if anything, my mom read to us a lot.

Additionally in his job as a day care worker, Michael notices from the children's homework notes that schools and teachers make purposeful efforts to encourage parents to read to their children.

Field experience site data

Michael was assigned to a classroom filled with 18 third graders and Mrs. Roberts, a cooperating teacher with thirty years of teaching experience. On the day of the observation, I arrived in the middle of Mrs. Roberts' math lesson to the third grade girls. Mrs. Roberts and another third grade teacher split their two classes by gender for math with Mrs. Roberts teaching the girls and the other third grade teacher teaching the boys. Once Mrs. Roberts finished her lesson, Michael began walking around the room assisting students on an individual basis.

From my observation and mostly from my conversation with Mrs. Roberts, the environment of and the types of reading experiences in this classroom met some of the literacy rich requirements set forth by Morrow et al. (1999). These include a fair amount of

print materials on the wall, open-faced bookshelves within the students' reach, read aloud, displays of student work, and portfolios. When asked about her philosophy of teaching reading, Mrs. Roberts responded in detail because I pointed out to her that I didn't get to observe during the morning literacy block.

That children should read a lot. In the best of all worlds, they should have come to school having been read to for years already, but we're finding that they don't always have that experience anymore. I read to the children everyday as well as have them read. In this district we do a whole language approach that integrates reading and writing skills across the curriculum. We have structured reading lessons where we're reading a whole class book or a web book and the children spend at least thirty minutes reading silently.

From the looks of the bookshelves, the books were used often just as she said.

Interview data

Pre field experience data

Michael's decision to be a teacher is based on his family experiences and the "upsides" rather than the "downsides" of the teaching profession.

Well I don't think that there is one particular reason, not one reason I wanted to be a teacher, but I just like working with kids. My mom, grew up in a large family of 19 children and my dad is from a family of 8 children, so it is like I've always been around lots of cousins and it just seems like working with kids kind of came natural to me. I have so many people say, you know, in teaching you get paid so much better if you go to this state or go to that state, and it is like, if you are into teaching for the money, it is like why did you even get into teaching. I don't know. I kind of see

myself staying in Iowa and not necessarily worrying about how big my paychecks are. The upsides of teaching are that you always stay young. I mean you always get to be like youthful around kids, and it is a fun job. It changes every day. You can make out of it what you want to and then kind of get out what you put in. It is like, not sitting behind a desk, typing and coming home complaining every day. I don't know, it's just fun. To me it is the ideal job, so that is kind of why I chose it.

In our conversations prior to Michael's field experience, I asked him, "What do you hope to learn from field experience?"

As much information as possible, you know, from lesson plans to classroom management. Just every angle. I hope to get a lot out of it. I know it is only like eight meeting times, but I hope to get a ton out of it.

Although Michael's response shows concern for classroom management, he does expect to learn in other areas as well.

Midstream field experience data

After a week in the field, I asked Michael, "What are you learning?"

Teaching is way tougher than you think. They're all at different levels and they have different ways of approaching things. You know, if you have a lesson planned out and you go in there and think, "oh this is going to be easy for them" the next thing you know, it's not easy for them. Just little things like that and lunch duty, recess duty, I mean there's tons of little things that you don't really think about.

This quote shows that Michael, like the other informants, is concerned with classroom management issues and getting his lessons right.

Next, I asked Michael to tell me about his whole-group reading lesson.

It's a poem structure called cinquain. In the structure there was nouns, adjectives, verbs, that kind of thing. Of course, two or three kids raised their hand and knew what it was. The other kids were kind of like, well, lost. That's why I reviewed it because Mrs. Roberts told me "we've done that before, and they should know what that is." But here's five kids that have no idea what it is. I thought it went really well. I did. They caught right on to it. There were a few mistakes here and there, but it was fun--a fun activity. I got the idea from a manual for the book Class Clown.

Michael's description of this lesson shares one way he reached his conclusion that teaching means being prepared to work with children on all different levels.

Lesson plan data

Michael's lesson, mentioned above, was written according to Hunter's model of direct instruction, included all the required components, and was sequenced well. The lesson began with a Shel Silverstein poem as an example of non-rhyming poetry and continued with an example of a cinquain. After an explanation of the parts of speech that provide the pattern for a cinquain, the class wrote a cinquain together about the story Class Clown. Last, the children wrote a cinquain independently following the pattern with 90% accuracy. Strengths of the lesson include using popular children's poetry as a model for teaching poetry; integrating grammar skill instruction with a writing lesson; and using writing to assess story comprehension. Areas of improvement include formally using writing process language with the children; creating a scoring sheet for the writing assignment; and assigning roles in the cooperative groups.

Concluding field experience data

During the last week of field experience, I asked Michael to describe how this experience had affected him as a preservice teacher.

I think it has definitely boosted my confidence. Especially when you have success in the lessons you do. The lessons she's picked--homonyms and stuff--they're fun lessons that the kids enjoy. Then when I look back I think how much fun they had and how much they learned and that makes me more confident that I can do this. The fractions one wasn't as good--I made some mistakes and corrected them, and that really boosted my confidence. I have the ability to make it better.

Finally, when asked to share his suggestions for future preservice teachers on how to do well in field experience, he replied: "go to everything, meetings, etc.; stay late; ask questions because you learn a lot from talking to the cooperating teacher; and keep a journal.

Summary

Teachers' stories are part of teachers' lives, and the study of Cassandra, Melvin, Aryn, Jasmine, and Michael helps us to understand the relationship between their lived experiences and their learning to teach. In this way, teacher educators can work toward facilitating the most effective teacher preparation program possible. Now that the informants for this study have been introduced, this study continues by with interpretations of their experiences and the emerging themes. These themes are categorized in Chapter 5 according to the areas in teacher education that will be informed by this research: early literacy education, teacher socialization, and field experience.

CHAPTER 5. INTERPRETATIONS

This chapter addresses the themes or findings of the study and is categorized according to early literacy education, teacher socialization, and field experience. Included in each category are selected quotes from the informants to support the findings. Following a summary of the findings, are recommendations for teacher education. Final thoughts bring closure to Chapter 5 and this study.

Early Literacy Education Findings

As noted in the review of literature in Chapter 2, success in early reading is a good predictor for continued success in reading (Juel, 1988; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Leslie & Allen, 1999) and exemplary early literacy classrooms are characterized as such when certain instructional methods are implemented (Braunger & Lewis, 1998; Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, Hampston, 1998; Morrow, Tracey, Woo, & Pressley, 1999). Throughout the data collection process, my conversations with the informants in this study were focused on what they were learning about teaching reading in the early grades. Following are my findings in this area.

How to teach reading

My first finding shows that the field experience component of the methods course enabled the preservice teachers (except Aryn) to articulate in greater detail a response to the question "How do you teach reading?" Following are *before* and *after* field experience responses from the informants.

Cassandra Before: *Lots and lots of practice and lot of instruction and phonics.*

Yeah. That's about as good as I can get right now.

Cassandra After: They have book boxes which I think is a good idea. Each student has their own. It's like a cereal box, and they get books in there that are at their level of reading right now, some that are harder, some that are lower. She just cycles them through. The ones that are easy dropped out or whatever, hard go to medium and then they add more. So they get a lot of individual practice is what I'm trying to stay. As far as I've seen, they never do a large group reading type thing. If I was working on a small group, she seems to be very, almost one on one. She has the students take turns reading so that unless we're short on time, then we all read together. Then from that, she can help each student as they go along. Um, she's very focused on sounding words out which I think is very good and applying different strategies to do that. That's basically their reading groups.

Melvin Before: How am I going to teach reading? I guess with sight words and with letter sounds, I think is a good way and then word parts. That's a lot of what we've been doing with Dr. Meyer. Um, I don't really know that kind of stuff.

Melvin After: It'd be nice to say that everybody is going to be at the stage where they can read for meaning and get stuff out of the book, but that's probably not going to be the case. I think that you have to do both. I know that a lot of people think that reading groups are bad, but I think they are necessary at times. Like, in that class, you couldn't have all of the kids reading the same book. Maybe the two chapter books, they could read together, and some of the kids would probably struggle a little bit, and they'd probably get through it. But then as far as like the ESL students. This isn't probably fair, but the ESL students, they're probably the slower readers. Sure you're always going to have somebody that's a little remedial in reading, they

probably would just be lost if a chapter book was being read. They wouldn't get any meaning out of it. They wouldn't even be able to stumble through the words. I think you have to teach groups in some sense.

Aryn Before: *I think a lot of phonics. I think that's important because without phonics you can't decode words. And so I would say, phonics and instruction along with a lot of experience with books and guide your curriculum enough so when they're learning about certain kind of a phonics pattern, they should encounter that in the book they're reading. As time goes on, the books get harder and harder. I think that's how I would handle it, and hopefully, they catch on.*

Aryn After: *Very little. All I've seen so far is independent reading in the morning they have like a half hour for independent reading. They can go get a snack from their bookbag, pick a book, sit down and read for a half hour.*

Jasmine Before: *So definitely phonemic awareness and phonics goes along with reading, and being able to put together all those connections. Coming up with the right words. Kids are better with words, I think with rhymes, than being able to sound out each individual phoneme. Reading has to do with all those things, a little bit of each of those.*

Jasmine After: *Teaching Reading. Harder than I thought. In her class, she has like kids who are very, they just don't know how to read. They don't know sight words, they don't, and there's kids who read so high. How do you get to those ones who are not up to par with the other class? It takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of patience. I just, like how do you teach all the different sounds, like all of the letters. Like they are having a hard time with that, but then there's kids who just read so fast.*

Michael Before: *I think like lower elementary we talked a lot about sight words. Um, and sight vocabulary, that kind of stuff. Getting words to where they're automatic, where you don't have to think about the reading skill but more the meaning behind it. You know. Your connection to it. So how that's done, I would say a lot of maybe sight word instruction. I guess just a lot of activities with phonics and all those things we've been learning, sight words, that kind of stuff. I don't know.*

Michael After: *Definitely that all kids are not at the same level. That's the first thing that I picked up on right away. Um, I don't know, they all have different abilities and different skills. Sounding out the words, they're kind of at the same level, but there's other subjects and other areas in the room where they just have different ways of approaching problems. So, you have to be careful how you do your lesson because they're all, not only are they at different levels, but they have a different way of thinking about stuff and a different way of approaching things.*

The informants did use their field experiences to broaden their background knowledge of how to teach reading. However, according to the joint position statement regarding early literacy education by the NAEYC and the IRA (1998), specific methodologies for early literacy instruction are not mentioned by name or even by description in the informants' responses. These very insightful preservice teachers seemed to be at a loss for words when it came to explaining themselves in detail. When the field experience had concluded, however, the informants were asked "What teaching of reading strategies are you aware of based on your experiences?" The following responses were given: leveled books and running records for placements; sound-it-out, questions on a worksheet, and characterization; guided reading and shared reading; and basals. Several of

these responses were evident in their lesson plans submitted for review by the researcher, but for the most part, no specific strategies were mentioned.

Functionally speaking, Fuller and Bown (1975) explain this lack of learning of early literacy education concepts as a result of being in the first stage of concern in preservice teacher development whereby there is a preoccupation with classroom management issues and building rapport with the children. Similar concerns were noted in Chapter 4 for each of the informants at some time during the field experience. On a basic level, I agree with Fuller and Bown's explanation.

However, perhaps the informants were unable to name or describe specific methodologies or even go beyond phonics, not because of their stage, but because of the amount of guesswork that was expected of them. Guesswork makes for fragmented experience and this, in turn, results in experience that is not instructive (Britzman, 1991). Additionally, consider this comment from Michael.

You know I thought from class you learn all these different things that kids need to know and all these different definitions, but it seems like, I'm sure it's just the grade level, it seems like a lot of it is independent. It's not really a lesson like here's how you write. A lot of it, they do their own writing and improve on their own writing skills. I don't know if she's really taught a lesson, like here's punctuation or something to give an example. It's more like they do writing on their own, and then they go back and use the skills they have to correct it. That's one thing. I thought there would be lessons everyday.

Michael was not sure whether he had even witnessed his cooperating teacher teach a lesson (Aryn reported similarly). Therefore, even though all informants had difficulty

identifying early literacy methods regardless of their grade placement, the spring semester of third grade is “too old” and problematized the efforts of preservice teachers in making accurate connections between theory and practice in early literacy education. This is particularly true since the course focused on kindergarten/first grade literacy instruction and the readings in the course packet focused on phonemic awareness.

Phonics approach

A second finding regarding how to teach reading is that these preservice teachers had a one-sided, “phonic” approach to early literacy education. When probed more specifically on how they would help a child figure out a word he/she was “stuck on,” the informants’ responses were unanimously phonic related or theoretically speaking, bottom-up. It is very noticeable in the following summaries of their responses that there is not any evidence of a balanced approach to teaching reading as recommended in the literature (Strickland, 1998).

Cassandra: Sound it out, break it apart into little words.

Melvin: Sound it out.

Aryn: Tell them the word or sound it out.

Jasmine: Look at the word, sound it out.

Michael: Sound it out or ask a peer.

Although “sound it out” is a useful word identification strategy, a balanced approach would encourage the use of additional strategies—particularly in the second and third grades. However, this course focused on kindergarten/first grade literacy instruction and the course packet included articles on phonemic awareness. The informants did not have enough background knowledge from the on-campus coursework regarding the use of additional

strategies or from the practica sites, which claimed to adhere to a balanced approach to literacy instruction.

Teacher Socialization Findings

Going beyond the interpretive approach and taking the critical perspective of teacher socialization, the findings in this section of the dissertation seek to reveal the gender issues in teacher education and the contradictory realities of learning to teach. It is of particular importance for me to note that the following informants' responses were not initiated by a question regarding gender. The gender related themes emerged from conversations with the informants.

Teaching as women's work

My first finding in the area of teacher socialization is that both females and males struggle with the societal notion that "teaching is women's work." It was very beneficial to have both male and female informants participate in this study because it revealed data on gender issues related to the teaching profession from both perspectives. Through these conversations, the informants were able to safely articulate concerns they had regarding this issue and in a sense "unpack" their baggage. Consider Cassandra's rationale for choosing the teaching profession.

I guess I grew up in a time when it was a woman's profession, and I'm not even that old, but there were women's professions and there were men's professions. And teachers were just women. You know, and I never really had a guy teacher, and so I thought that it would be a good idea and proceeded in my school.

Cassandra's socialization led her to believe that teaching would be a good profession for a woman. Although she now knows that both men and women can be elementary teachers, she realizes that this gender stereotype had an affect on her decision to become a teacher.

In the following quote, Melvin considers the possible gender-related reasons why teaching is not highly respected.

Just, I don't know. Maybe since it's traditionally, this is going to sound sexist, but I don't mean it to be, it was traditionally a woman's job or a pink collar job is what they would call it. The pay is not as good, and pay determines respect in our society sometimes. So you think just because they're making \$25,000 a year, whatever, that obviously they're only working to that level. And that's not necessarily the case. You know. I think that society views it as not that hard of job. You should obviously know fifth grade math, however old you are, so it's not that difficult, you just have to explain it to kids. And that's not necessarily the case. I think, those two things help to make it underrated.

Then he continues with his thoughts on what it is like to be a male in a mostly female major such as elementary education and how he justifies his career choice.

Sometimes I think that people, even people that I know, they're like "you're in it for the girls." I'm like no. I didn't go to college for four years to be in class with a lot of girls. Or "you just want to be a coach." I mean, yeah, I do want to be a coach, so I kind of admit that, but that's not the main reason I'm teaching. I could teach without being a coach. I wouldn't mind that. Um, so yeah, I kind of know some of that. Teaching is also something for males too. I don't think it's fair that, in my classes or even the first day I was here for orientation, they were like, you won't have any

problem getting a job because you're a male. I'm like, I don't want that. You know.

Just because I'm a man, I still want to have to go through the same steps. I still want to have to have a strong resume or whatever. So, that kind of bothers me sometimes.

Next, Michael shares why he hesitated in choosing an elementary education degree and went to community college to complete his general education requirements.

I kind of, well, I kind of talked to some people about it, and they're like, well I don't really think it's that bad. I think it's getting better and there's a lot more guys in teaching, so you won't get any hassle. I think that was one of my main reasons for not going into it right away. It's just like, I was going to get like, 'only women do that.' You know. It's like there should be a lot of guys, and I'm like one of two guys in every class, which doesn't bother me. I think it should be more balanced. I mean especially in elementary. Growing up, you know, my first male teacher was in fifth grade. I think a lot of guys do want to take on a teaching role and be day-care workers and that kind of thing, but it just seems like it's a lot of social things. Guys, you know, guys don't do that. And I mean it, you know, that's one of the main reasons that almost stopped me from wanting to become a teacher.

Fortunately, both Melvin and Michael were able to go beyond the obstacles created by gender and are currently pursuing a degree in elementary education. Interestingly enough, these two young men would not characterize themselves as “trailblazers” even though they are a minority in the elementary education major and the elementary schools. According to Williams (1995), this is not an anomaly because men are “typically drawn into these occupations through their experiences in more conventional jobs, and they are encouraged by

close friends and family members who reassure them that their masculinity will not be questioned by making such a move" (p. 181).

Sexism in field experience placements

A second finding related to gender in the area of teacher socialization is that sexism in teacher education programs occurs when male preservice teachers are only placed in the uppermost grade levels of what is considered early childhood education. The informants, both female and male, raised the issue that the males received third grade field experience placements. This issue, as mentioned below in the quotes from the informants, not only caused them to draw conclusions which in essence perpetuated sex role stereotypes, but also limited their experiences regarding early literacy education because the course focused on kindergarten and first grade reading education.

Melvin: Maybe males relate better with older students? Rougher around the edges and that doesn't work in kindergarten and first grade. I don't know.

Jasmine: They probably think guys don't deal well with younger kids, so they stick all of us females in there, which I think is a bunch of.... I know a kindergarten teacher who is male whose class I've seen. He went to ISU, and he did fine with them. I think that's wrong to place just males in higher grades.

There were only three males in this particular course and it could have been by mere chance that they received the third grade placements. Either way, the message was interpreted by the informants that males have a place in elementary education, just not the lower grades.

Dealing with sexist comments

A third finding related to gender in the area of teacher socialization is that preservice teachers, in this case Aryn, are not equipped to handle sexist situations. In the following quote, Aryn wonders if gender is at the root of her tumultuous relationship with her cooperating teacher, Mr. McKimmey.

I think another thing that's bothering me is that he's a male. He's a fairly big guy.

He's intimidating. I think that's why the students respect him, just because he's so

big. You know what I mean. . . . I just think the fact that he comes off kind of rude to

me. He's kind of intimidating to me anyway. It's really hard for me to make an

impression on him.

Not only does Aryn report feeling intimidated by his size, but also by his language towards her.

I'm a "sweety." That's the comment I get. That's not professional. You just don't

say that, you say, "you're kind of a tender heart, and you need to be more assertive."

You don't say, "you're a sweety."

Fortunately, Aryn is taking her human relations course this semester. When I asked her how that course would interpret the "sweety" comment, she was able to identify this as sexist.

However, she continued to make excuses for Mr. McKimmey.

I mean, I don't think he meant it offensively necessarily, but that's still something that

I would not say.

Aryn's comment suggests a resistance to acknowledge sexism in education.

According to Bloom and Ochoa (1993), this not an uncommon finding among female elementary education preservice teachers.

Fragmentation of experience—mismatch of college coursework and real world

In this study I found that teacher socialization was also affected by the fragmentation of experience and this indeed negatively affected the informants' learning. An example of fragmentation was revealed when I asked the informants how their experiences in the field matched up with their college coursework earlier in the semester.

Michael: Well, the skills that we are taught to teach kids don't apply because these third graders know it. So, I don't think they really need more instruction with skills. I think they need more experience and more that kind of thing.

Melvin: It goes pretty much hand and hand. The only thing is like we learned not to use worksheets that much. Worksheets are effective too, but sometimes you need to break it up and do something else. . . . For reading, our stuff was younger like the sight words and phonemic awareness. They're past that. As far as like sight words, they do that. I'm trying to think what else we do. Wow, I've been out of class two weeks, and I can't remember anything. They don't do phonemic awareness. They're past the stages of that stuff. They know how to read. They're reading more for content, and to build vocabulary now. I think we learned that in there too someplace. Maybe not, but it seems like we did.

Cassandra: I didn't think it was going to be this difficult. Even though in college it's just been like, here are all the things you can do and you just assume they're going to work. I noticed that it doesn't work out that way. . . . There's a hundred different ways, and I think it depends a lot on the student. That's something that we never really touched upon that in our reading classes--the importance of levels and the importance of grouping students together with similar reading abilities. Things like

that. We didn't really touch a lot on basal. Something we never talked about at all is how to group the students, you know. All the different tests you can give them is good to know, but how do you fit those test scores into the levels. I think some of that has to do with sight vocabulary, which really wasn't focused on very much in class. Lots of things don't match.

Michael and Melvin's responses could be confounded by the fact that they were placed in third grade classrooms and, therefore, felt that early literacy methods did not necessarily apply. Cassandra, on the other hand, seems to be able to see similarities, but is unable to connect theory with practice. Overall, their responses were indecisive and contradictory.

Fragmentation of experience—dual role of teacher and student

A second finding related to fragmentation making experience non-instructive is that the dual role of student and teacher in field experience sets up the preservice teachers to be passive learners. Following are informants' perceptions about their dual role before field experience began.

Cassandra: It sounds to me like I'll be a puppet, but I don't want it to be that way. I want to feel like I have the freedom to say what I want to say and to ask for what I need or what I think would be appropriate. The way that I have taken the information when I think about field experience, I sense that we're supposed to be extremely appreciative that these teachers would even possibly think of letting us in their classroom. And that this is a really big privilege, even though I pay for it, and I don't know. I think that's what my ideas are. I think that's part of the reason why I don't want to be too upfront.

Aryn: *Well, I don't want to step on my mentoring teacher's toes. I don't want to you know, get off track somehow. . . . Well, because I guess it's not my classroom, so you feel like you're still kind of limited to what they want from you. It's not complete freedom I guess. That's kind of what's awkward about the whole thing to me because you get to play two roles at the same time. I'm a student trying to be a teacher. I can't really do what I want because it's not my class. I think that's what makes me nervous.*

Jasmine: *First I'm going to be more observant. I don't want to step on this teacher's toes and feel like I'm a nuisance. I'm there to help her as much as she will allow me do, but I'm hoping to interact with the kids and do a lot of observing, like what they're thinking when they do different lessons. I really want to get to know the kids.*

Michael: *I haven't really thought about that, but I think it can be balanced with what they've given us. I think you need to separate them. Like when I'm the teacher, it's like the student is over here, I'm the teacher now. When you're not teaching you can sit back and be the student. I don't think it's necessarily combining the two. It's just recognizing when you need to be the teacher and when you need to be the student.*

Cassandra, Aryn, and Jasmine all mentioned that this dual role meant trying not to "step on any toes." Michael, being the optimist that he is, thought it would all work out just fine as long as he kept both roles separate. However, after the field experience Michael reflects upon his dual role in this way.

That reminds me of last time when we talked about this and I said I was going to separate the teacher and the student. When I get into teaching, I was going to be the teacher, not a student. But when I was up there, I was like, they really are connected-

-really related. If they're not connected, at least when I was teaching, how do you learn, reflect or evaluate yourself?

Furthermore, Michael reports that "the level of comfort in the room" is what he thinks makes this dual role less difficult for him.

I don't think my teacher is demanding or there isn't anyone in the back of the room assessing what you do. It just seems like if you need help or if you make a mistake, you can step back and my teacher can help me out.

Cassandra and Jasmine would agree that their relationship with their cooperating teachers has made this dual role surmountable.

Cassandra: I think I get a lot of respect from my teacher and that I am treated like an equal, an entry-level teacher rather than her student. So I don't feel a whole lot of difference. Even when I ask her about things, she doesn't criticize me or give me too many suggestions, and she directly answers my question. I feel like a fellow teacher, and she's just helping me out. I do try to take in everything she says because I am still a student and take it very seriously. We have a different kind of relationship- some students have said they become very good friends with their practicum teachers and some keep quite a distance...

Jasmine: I think it's very comfortable. I'm so comfortable in that room. She's not talking down to me like a student that doesn't know anything. We talk openly, and I ask her what she's learned from certain situations. I am just beginning and don't know anything and she's very sensitive to that. She's very open. I don't know how else to describe her.

Aryn, on the other hand, does not report the same level of respect from her mentoring/cooperating teacher as Cassandra does and, therefore, does not feel this dual role is an easy one to step into. Her response below comes after her experiences in the field.

That is probably the hardest part. When I'm giving my lesson it's hard to really be the teacher for me because I don't feel that I have the respect. Not only that. I'm still a student because I'm worrying about what he is writing down about me. I'm still a student. . . . I just feel really like he is trying to make me feel little. I don't know if it's because I am a student or if it's a personality conflict or it's just that he wants to be in control and I'm just there because he needs someone to make copies. But it's hard being in the middle, I think. Especially when he doesn't treat me like an equal.

The relationship with the mentoring/cooperating teacher, as described previously by Cassandra, Aryn, Jasmine, and Michael, makes a difference in a preservice teacher's being able to successfully manage the dual role of student and teacher during a field experience. The mentoring/cooperating teachers reported, as presented in Chapter 3, that their goal was to build an open and flexible relationship with their practica students. In all cases here, with the exception of Aryn, the goal was achieved.

Field Experience Findings

Field experience is reportedly the most valuable experience in learning to teach. As stated in Chapter 2, teacher preparation programs are increasing the field components in many of the required courses as a means of improving teacher education. The following findings in the area of field experience are related to the value of field experience, the mixed

messages of field experience, and the growth in reflective thinking resulting from field experience.

Value of field experience

The first finding in the area of field experience is that field experience is valuable in building preservice teachers' confidence in learning how to teach.

***Cassandra:** As I mentioned before, I feel a lot more comfortable knowing I made the right decision. As far as self-esteem goes, I feel very capable whenever I'm in the classroom. My teacher that came and watched the classroom said she was surprised at how calm I looked when I was teaching, but inside I was the opposite! She said on the outside, you couldn't tell. And that makes me feel good- even though I may be nervous, the focus remains on the children. I'm so ready to start. I don't like class anymore.*

***Melvin:** It has given me a lot of confidence. The kids do respect me and don't try to take advantage of me. They seem to understand- and don't miss a beat. Sometimes when they have questions, they come to ask me rather than Mrs. Barbara, and that made me feel good, too. I feel comfortable in this classroom. And, maybe the next experience won't be as comfortable, but I won't worry about that now.*

***Aryn:** I don't know if failing one time will be a smack in the face and help me next time know better what to do. Maybe it will be a good thing in the end; I don't know. As far as myself and my own feelings here, I feel like a complete loser. My whole self-esteem is out the window.*

***Jasmine:** Actually, if I wanted to teach kindergarten, I could do it. Even though I'm more focused on the upper grade levels, kindergarten wouldn't be that bad.*

Michael: *I think it has definitely boosted my confidence. Especially when you have success in the lessons you do. The lessons she's picked- homonyms and stuff- they're fun lessons that the kids enjoy. Then when I look back I think how much fun they had and how much they learned and that makes me more confident that I can do this. The fractions one wasn't as good- I made some mistakes and corrected them, and that really boosted my confidence. I have the ability to make it better.*

Each informant, with the exception of Aryn, report that field experience boosted their confidence in teaching. Supervisors, children, and cooperating teachers were integral factors in these results.

Hidden curriculum

My second finding in the area of field experience is that the structure of field experience encourages conforming behavior. I call this "hidden curriculum" because these independent, creative, free-thinking, *I'm going to make a difference* preservice teachers reverted to conforming responses when explaining to me their plans on how to be "successful" in their field experiences. This is not unlike MacKinnon's (1989) findings that conformity of early childhood student teachers to their cooperating teacher's practices is a "fact of life." In the following quotes, only the female informants report the use of this "success" strategy, whereas Michael calls it "respect."

Cassandra: *Positive attitude. Do whatever my teacher tells me. Always be willing to help.*

Aryn: *I don't want to step on his toes, I mean, if he is reading at 9:00, I don't want to ask him to do my Math lesson then. I don't think that would be a good idea. I just don't want to be a boss I guess. . . . I've learned to respect authority I think. I know*

that someone is above me, I just do what they say. It's not something I'm real thrilled about. I just do it anyway, roll with the punches I guess. I've done everything that he's asked me to do.

Michael: *I think it's respect. Just because you're only there for eight days, and when you're in your classroom a year from now, you can do how you believe, how your philosophy is. So I think it's respecting their decision. I think there's a difference between conforming and respecting their philosophy.*

For the informants, this conformity approach to success could be related to the following responses that came up in our conversations over the semester.

Cassandra: *That was how I was taught I think. Just do what you're told and be a good girl.*

Melvin: *Well, I guess I was just always good. I just learned how to be good, I guess. . . I always got my work done. I never really acted out. I always had the urge, not necessarily the urge to, but I was always a little flighty. I'm just not very good at sitting still. I was always afraid to get up and move around because I was afraid of getting yelled at. I'm kind of sensitive. . . . I guess I always knew what was right and wrong. I always tried to do what was right.*

Aryn: *I don't really know how I would handle it if someone in my workplace called me 'sweety.' That's kind of difficult. Maybe, I'm going to have to be more assertive. I already know that's a big problem for me. I have a hard time being assertive. I'm just trying to be nice. I'm just expected to be polite.*

Conformity is not a new concept to the aspect of "hidden curriculum" in field experience (Goodman, 1985; MacKinnon, 1989). However, the notion that preservice

teachers need to reflect upon where such connections of success with conformity or “being good” emerge and how they affect their professional development is worth considering.

Growth in reflective thinking

A third and hopeful finding in the area of field experience in teacher education was the growth in reflective thinking by the informants during the interviews. Reflective thinking is a desirable and essential part of professional practice (LaBoskey, 1994; Schon, 1987). In addition to the before and after quotes mentioned in the early literacy education portion of this chapter, the following responses are examples of the informants’ ability to be highly reflective.

Melvin: We also talked about worksheets- I’d probably use less worksheets than Mrs. Barbara- not that they’re bad, but I just won’t use them as much. I also think I’m a little more free-flowing than she is- sometimes I think she’s just out for the answers, and I think I’ll be a little more flexible than that. Maybe after 21 years I’ll be the same way, but right now, I don’t think I’ll be that way.

Melvin: The only thing that I don’t really understand is that the Bosnian students are in there for Spanish, but I think that that sometimes confuses them more. After all, they’re kind of like all ready learning a new language--English.

Melvin: I think many times people assume ESL kids are just stupid. That’s not fair. I think sometimes people do get mislabeled. I think even different SES backgrounds affect performance in the classroom- the way things are worded on tests might be different from the ‘slang’ that different people use.

Jasmine: I think a lot of people think just because I’m Asian that I’m smart. Oh, work with her, she’s smart. I’ve always gotten that comment in high school. I’m not

dumb, but I'm not the smartest kid in class. Average. I always have problems with my homework just as a normal person. I'm normal. I don't speak any Korean, so don't ask me. . . . One time this girl came up to me in class and said, "you're Indian." I'm like, what. She said, "you're Indian because your skin is darker than mine." I'm like, "no I'm an American." She's like, "no you're not. You're Indian. You look like Pocahontas."

Jasmine: The basal is not for me just because it's all set in stone, like what you're supposed to do. You know. You don't really make up anything of your own. You can add to it--which is nice. Like Dr. Meyer said, as a first-year teacher it's nice because you don't really know how to start out maybe, and so the basal is just kind of there to just guide you along. I might do basal for a little bit, and then maybe just kind of start making up my own to see what works in the classroom.

Michael: You know, like I think anyone could do a basal reading program, and get by. But I don't want to just get by. It seems like not being aware of the whole language thing, that makes me skeptical of what we're learning in class because I think there are other things out there.

The above mentioned demonstrations of the informants' ability to think reflectively needs to be nurtured by teacher educators (LaBoskey, 1994). However, according to the female informants both before and during field experience, communication was a key ingredient—either present or missing in their experiences—in facilitating the reflective process.

Cassandra: Communication I think. If my teacher, even if it's criticism, that's fine. Well, hopefully. Constructive criticism but communicating, letting me know what's

going on, what she expects, advice, like I said. If there isn't any, I think that will really ruin my experience. Even if I don't agree with the way she teaches, hopefully, she'll at least give me some background on why she did this.

Aryn: *I don't really let him know that I know stuff.* **Sharon:** Why not? **Aryn:**

Because I feel intimidated by him. **Sharon:** Aryn, you're a 4.0 student. **Aryn:** *Yeah,*

but I don't think he realizes that. I think he thinks I'm stupid. **Sharon:** Where'd he

get that idea? **Aryn:** *From my lesson.* **Sharon:** Aryn. Oh Aryn. **Aryn:** *It's terrible.*

Jasmine: *I talk to her. I talk to her about other things that don't even involve school,*

like "how was your week-end?" I talked to her the other day about her house, about

her kids. You know, about things that are going on in my life. It's not just a

cooperating student and a cooperating teacher. It's above that level, I think. I like

that. Like, I feel like I'm very comfortable with her. If I had a problem right now in

my life, I could probably talk to her. It's very nice, and I hope to stay in contact with

her even after this.

Based on these responses, teacher educators are called to "help reflection happen" (Laboskey, 1994, p. 122) because "deliberation and reflection are methods for charting a meaningful though uncertain course in social affairs" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1991, p. 263).

Summary of Findings

Early literacy education

Early literacy education field experiences broadened the background knowledge of preservice teachers, and this was evidenced by their ability to articulate a more detailed response to the question "How to teach reading?" After being in the field, however, their

responses failed to name specific strategies recommended in the literature and focused primarily on phonics. Classroom management issues outweighed concerns with teaching reading. On two occasions, the preservice teachers were unaware whether or not their cooperating teachers were teaching reading lessons because of the lack of early literacy methods implemented in the second semester of third grade and the focus on kindergarten/first grade instruction in the on-campus course.

Teacher socialization

Gender stereotyping is difficult to overcome and is harmful on many levels to both females and males. A female informant reported feeling influenced to be a teacher because it is traditionally a woman's job. The males in this study shared concerns about choosing elementary education as a profession, and their hesitations were reinforced by not being placed with younger children for this early literacy field experience. When faced with sexism, one preservice teacher was not equipped to recognize it as harmful or deal with it in a constructive manner. Fragmentation of experience occurred when preservice teachers noticed contradictions between college coursework and fieldwork, felt unprepared, and struggled with the dual role of being a student and a teacher. Finally, the relationship between the cooperating teacher and the preservice teacher made the dual role much easier.

Field experience

Preservice teachers value field experience as a boost of confidence. However, the "hidden curriculum" finds its way into this experience when preservice teachers note an urge to "be good" or "conform" in order to succeed. This notion that submission results in success is not liberating for any human or a desirable characteristic in a future teacher. Many of the preservice teachers, however, were able to question the *status quo* and exhibit critical

reflective thinking on several issues related to early literacy education. Communication with cooperating teachers was important for the informants' field experiences to be instructive.

Finally, on page one of this study, Britzman's quote recommending a dialogic approach to teacher education is named as the impetus for this research—in fact, the paradigm guiding this research. Consider the following quotes from the question, "how has participating in this research affected you as a preservice teacher?"

Cassandra: *Positively, it gives me time to think and reflect on what I've done and think about how I feel at the end of the day, whereas otherwise, I would not consider that.*

Melvin: *Oh, yeah. It's allowed me to come in and talk about what's going on and get my thoughts organized. I probably talk a little bit about it with my roommates, but they don't understand. . . . I get to say what I think out loud, and get probed a little bit. It has helped especially in the beginning when we talked about what I wanted to get out of teaching. It has also helped me to put myself in situations without actually being in them so that when I do encounter them, I've thought out the potential situation. It has been very helpful- I would recommend this for next year's students.*

Jasmine: *It has made me more aware. I try to take in as much as I can to give feedback to you and help you. I know you're looking for early literacy stuff with reading and writing so I try to remember as much about what kids said or what they're thinking or what I was thinking at the time. It makes me sort out my feelings, too. Usually when you're done with your field experience, you keep those comments to yourself, and its helped me sort them out. A chance to spill your guts. It's nice- I*

like it. I hope you're getting out of it what you want. I hope you're learning something.

Michael: It's nice to talk about stuff. Especially when you come to a conclusion you haven't really thought about before. All of a sudden when you're talking about it, you think, "it does make sense". It's nice to talk about how teaching went--what should be changed. . . . Hopefully your research will change those things we all talked about.

Recommendations

Based on these findings and interpretations, recommendations for teacher education in the areas of early literacy education, teacher socialization, and field experience are warranted.

Early literacy education

Requiring a course in primary literacy education for elementary education majors, as does the teacher education program at Iowa State University, shows a strong commitment to the importance of early literacy education as recommended in the literature (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Jalongo, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000). However, such course curricula should include a balanced approach to teaching literacy in the early grades. Additionally, preservice teachers need more explicit instruction in identifying teacher characteristics and methodology related to successful early literacy education.

Teacher socialization

Zeichner and Gore (1990) support a critical approach to teacher socialization that brings injustices that are taken for granted to the forefront. This study brings two such

instances to light: sexism and fragmentation of experience. Therefore, the first recommendation here is that teacher educators take note of gender stereotyping when assigning field placements. This means placing male preservice teachers in the kindergarten, first or second grades. Second, teacher educators need to be ready to assist preservice teachers in dealing with sexism in the schools and in society. As future teachers, these people are going to be in a perfect position to teach children the pitfalls and consequences of sexism. How can they do this unless they experience a process that questions the *status quo*?

Finally, alleviating the fragmentation of experience for preservice teachers is crucial. The mismatch of college coursework and field experience causes preservice teachers to question what they know and question the credibility of their coursework. Additionally, by not addressing the dual role of student and teacher, preservice teachers take on a role of conformist in order to succeed in the field. The results of such fragmentation—such contradictory realities if you will—are not an educational experience unless a dialogic stance is embraced by teacher education (Britzman, 1991). Therefore, teacher educators need to provide safe opportunities for preservice teachers to deconstruct and discuss such realities of teaching.

Field experience

The role of field experience in teacher education is heralded by the literature (Ayers, 1993; Nelson & Hammerman, 1996), by the mentoring/cooperating teachers in this study, and by the informants. The findings of this study support this notion as well because the informants' experiences definitely broadened their background knowledge of teaching reading and encouraged growth in reflective thinking. However, there are two

recommendations for teacher education that would improve the field experience in early literacy education.

First, the placements should match the focus of the on-campus course. For example, since the course focused on kindergarten/first grade teaching strategies, then the practica placements should be in kindergarten and first grade. Second, since literature shows that preservice teachers focus on classroom management at this stage (Fuller & Bown, 1975), classroom management should be the focus during the first lessons presented by the preservice teachers and multiple opportunities to implement literacy lessons should follow.

Final Thoughts

As a teacher educator, this research project and process has informed me in several ways. It has helped me piece together the fragments of my life as a researcher and as a teacher educator into a "crazy quilt" (Ayers, 1993, p. 1). Ayers' further explanation of his quilt metaphor truly captures my experiences this semester as a qualitative researcher and a teacher educator:

To make a life in teaching is largely to find your own way, to follow this or that thread, to work until your fingers ache, your mind feels as if it will unravel, and your eyes give out, and to make mistakes and then rework large pieces. It is sometimes tedious and demanding, confusing and uncertain, and yet it is as often creative and dazzling: Surprising splashes of color can suddenly appear at its center; unexpected patterns can emerge and lend the whole affair a sense of grace and purpose and possibility. (Ayers, 1993, p. 1)

As a qualitative researcher, one powerful "pattern" revealed to me is that dominant discourses in our culture, such as sexism, affect preservice teachers in many ways. It affects them as children learning to "be good" in school, as adolescents choosing a course of college study, and as young adults dealing with sexist comments as conflicts from a cooperating

teacher. It is my recommendation that future research address this issue in order to inform teacher education on how to “work until your fingers ache” to stop the phenomenon of sexism.

A second “pattern” in teacher education needing further research is the fragmentation of experience resulting from the mismatch of curriculum delivered on-campus and field experience expectations. Since field experience in teacher education is deemed crucial in the professional development of preservice teachers, this event deserves to follow best practice as informed by additional qualitative research.

As a teacher educator, this research process pleasantly reminded me that teaching means supporting my students, in this case preservice teachers, as they struggle to find their voices and deal with the contradictory realities of learning to teach. In my research of the struggle of learning to be a teacher, a “surprising splash of color” was suddenly revealed to me upon reflection of my relationships with the informants. This same relationship can occur in teaching when student (informant) and teacher (researcher) consider each other’s past and present experiences, enter into a critical dialogue regarding these experiences, and then begin to make sense of the conflict in lived experiences.

I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to become well acquainted with these five informants and to learn from their experiences. I found their upbeat personalities (even in the face of the uncertainty of field experience and the pressure of finals), their devotion to the teaching profession, and their thoughtful responses quite inspiring. Throughout this process I kept wishing that I knew my own students as well. Our conversations this past semester paralleled the dialogic approach to teacher education for

which I strive, encouraged me to continue with this teaching transformation, and provided a firm rationale for further research into critical teacher socialization.

APPENDIX A. APPROVAL LETTER AND CONSENT FORMS

Letter of Approval for Research from Cooperating Institutions

February 4, 2000

Dear Building Administrator:

I am a doctoral student in curriculum and instruction at Iowa State University and am conducting a qualitative research study concerned with the socialization of preservice teachers in the area of early literacy education. Data collection for my study involves campus interviews with students enrolled in EI Ed 377 at Iowa State University and continues with field observations of the students during their required practica in early literacy education.

The required practicum accompanying EI Ed 377 will take place in your building from March 27 through April 19, 2000. This letter is a request for permission for me to make at least five observations of these students in their practicum classrooms. Each observation will be at least 30 minutes in length. The classroom teacher and the practicum student will receive prior notice of the observations.

The information obtained during these observations will be used to write my Ph.D. dissertation, which will be read by my respondents and by my committee. Real names and locations will not be used during data collection or in the dissertation. A tape recorder will be used during the observations. The data collected via fieldnotes and cassette tapes will be destroyed May 31, 2000.

If you grant me permission to observe practica students in your building for my dissertation research according to the preceding terms, please sign the form below and return it to me, the researcher. Thank you again for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Sharon J. Jensen
Simpson College
Education Department
701 North C Street
Indianola, IA 50125

Dr. Theresa McCormick, Major Professor
Iowa State University
Curriculum & Instruction Department
N165E Lagomarcino Hall
Ames, IA 50011

I (do/do not) grant permission for the researcher to observe practica students in my building.
Signed _____ Title _____ Date _____

CONSENT FORM

February 4, 2000

Dear Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research for this dissertation. As a participant in a case study, you will be interviewed a minimum of five times and observed a minimum of five times with each time period lasting at least thirty minutes. The information gained from the interviews and observations will be used to write my Ph.D. dissertation. The following points are the terms of participating in this case study:

1. The information obtained during this project will be used to write my Ph.D. dissertation, which may be read by my respondents and will be read by my committee. After the degree is successfully completed, the paper will be filed with other dissertations.
2. Real names will not be used during data collection or in the dissertation unless special permission has been given.
3. A tape recorder will be used during the interviews and observations.
4. You have the right to withdraw at any time from the study, for any reason, and the data will be returned to you upon request.
5. You will receive a copy of your case study and the dissertation before the final draft is written, and you will have the opportunity to negotiate changes with the researcher.
6. You will receive a copy of the dissertation soon after completion.

If you agree to participate in this case study for my dissertation research according to the preceding terms, please sign the form below and return it to me, the researcher. Thank you again for your cooperation.

Sharon J. Jensen, Researcher
Simpson College
Education Department
701 North C Street
Indianola, IA 50125

Dr. Theresa McCormick, Major Professor
Iowa State University
Curriculum & Instruction Department
N165E Lagomarcino Hall
Ames, IA 50011

Signed Consent Form

I (do/do not) grant permission to be quoted directly in my case study and in the researcher's dissertation.

Respondent _____ Date _____

CONSENT FORM

March 31, 2000

Dear Cooperating Teacher:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research for this dissertation. As a participant in a case study, you will be interviewed a minimum of one time and your classroom will be observed a minimum of two times with each time period lasting at least thirty minutes. The information gained from the interviews and observations will be used to write my Ph.D. dissertation. The following points are the terms of participating in this case study:

1. The information obtained during this project will be used to write my Ph.D. dissertation, which may be read by my respondents and will be read by my committee. After the degree is successfully completed, the paper will be filed with other dissertations.
2. Real names will not be used during data collection or in the dissertation unless special permission has been given.
3. A tape recorder will be used during the interviews and observations.
4. You have the right to withdraw at any time from the study, for any reason, and the data will be returned to you upon request.
5. You will receive a copy of your practica student's case study before the final draft is written, and you will have the opportunity to negotiate changes with the researcher.
6. Upon request you will receive a copy of the dissertation soon after completion.

If you agree to participate in this case study for my dissertation research according to the preceding terms, please sign the form below and return it to me, the researcher. Thank you again for your cooperation.

Sharon J. Jensen, Researcher
Simpson College
Education Department
701 North C Street
Indianola, IA 50125

Dr. Theresa McCormick, Major Professor
Iowa State University
Curriculum & Instruction Department
N165E Lagomarcino Hall
Ames, IA 50011

Signed Consent Form

I (do/do not) grant permission to be quoted directly in the researcher's dissertation.

Respondent _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B. SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Sample List of Interview Questions

1. Why are you interested in the teaching profession?
2. Tell me about your own early literacy experiences.
3. How have your school experiences affected you as a preservice teacher?
4. How does one learn to be a teacher?
5. What is it like to be a preservice teacher during field experience?
6. How have your field experiences affected you as a preservice teacher?
7. How have your field experiences informed you as a teacher of early literacy learners?
8. What are the issues in early literacy education?
9. How do you teach early literacy learners? How do you know this?
10. How do you assess early literacy learners? How do you know this?
11. How do you motivate early literacy learners? How do you know this?
12. Do you think teaching is a female profession? Explain.
13. What is it like being a female or male preservice teacher?

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